



Beyond Olympic London
5 GREAT GETAWAYS BY RAIL
PAGE 78

TRAVELER

NOBODY KNOWS THIS WORLD BETTER | MAY 2012

50 TOURS *of a Lifetime*

RETURN TO JERUSALEM

A SON OF THE CITY
REVISITS HIS PAST

PAGE 108

CHEATING DEATH

"HOW TRAVEL
KEEPS ME ALIVE"

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THE WORLD'S BEST GUIDED TRIPS

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HIKING WALES | BUENOS AIRES ON FOOT | SHOULD PETS TRAVEL?

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[NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELER]

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NOW LEAVING LONDON

From the real Downton Abbey to free-spirited Brighton, five train stops offer escape from the capital

Photographs by JOHN KERNICK

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TOURS OF A LIFETIME

Our seventh annual list of guided trips curates 50 experiences that just may prove transformative

By MARGARET LOFTUS

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CHEATING DEATH

Against all medical advice, the vagabonding author hikes a Hawaiian volcano crater, floats above a Samoan reef, and admires flowers in the Arctic

By EDWARD READICKER-HENDERSON

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JERUSALEM BY THE BOOK

A son relies on a weathered guide—written by his parents in the 1950s—to rediscover Israel's holy city

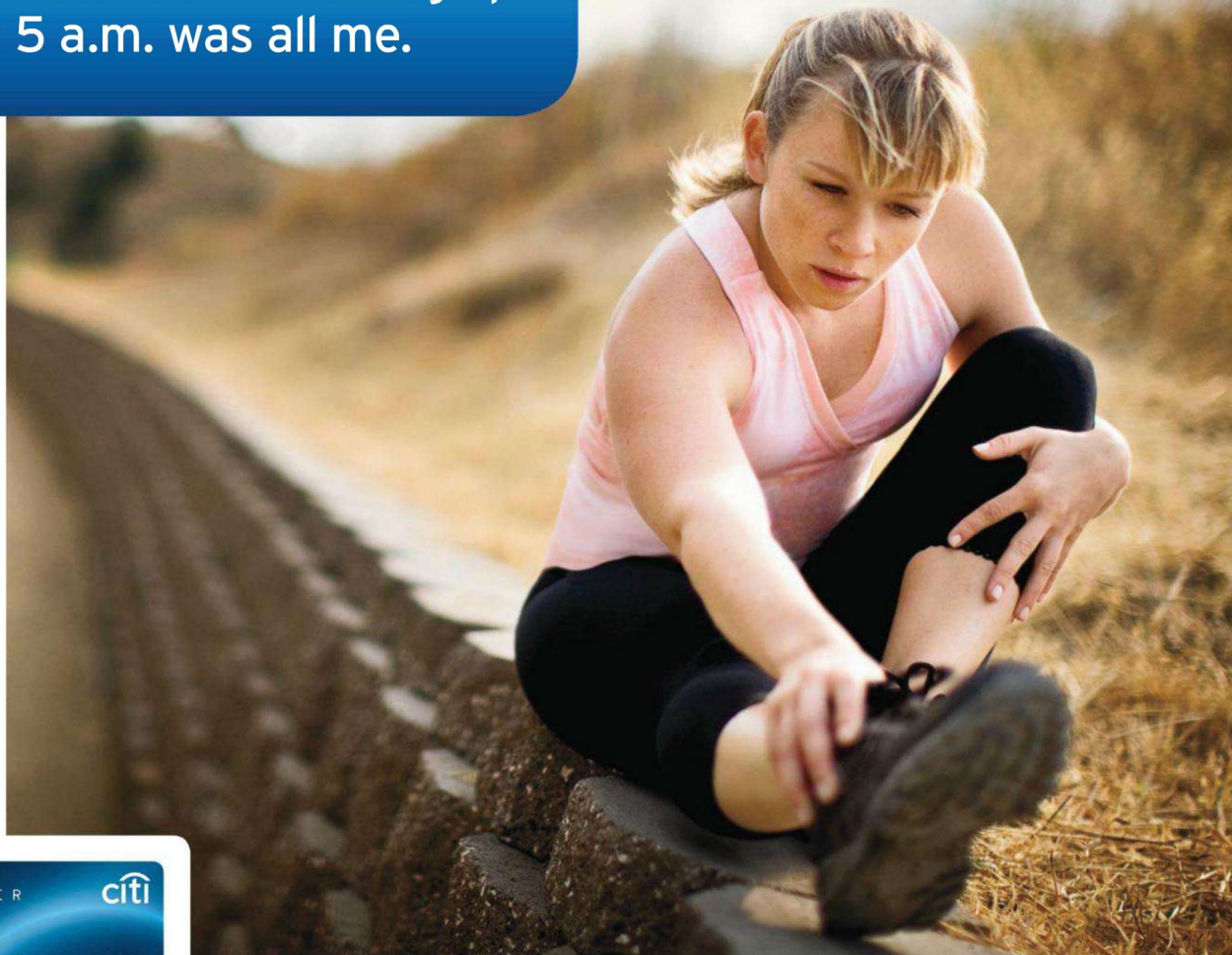
By MICHAEL ROSENFELD

Photographs by
ALEXANDRA AVAKIAN



Steamed up: The Watercress Line chugs through England's bucolic Hampshire.

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We had the gondola all to ourselves, except for our driver, Adamo. Jeffrey thought it amusing to harmonize. Adamo agreed. I was less sure.

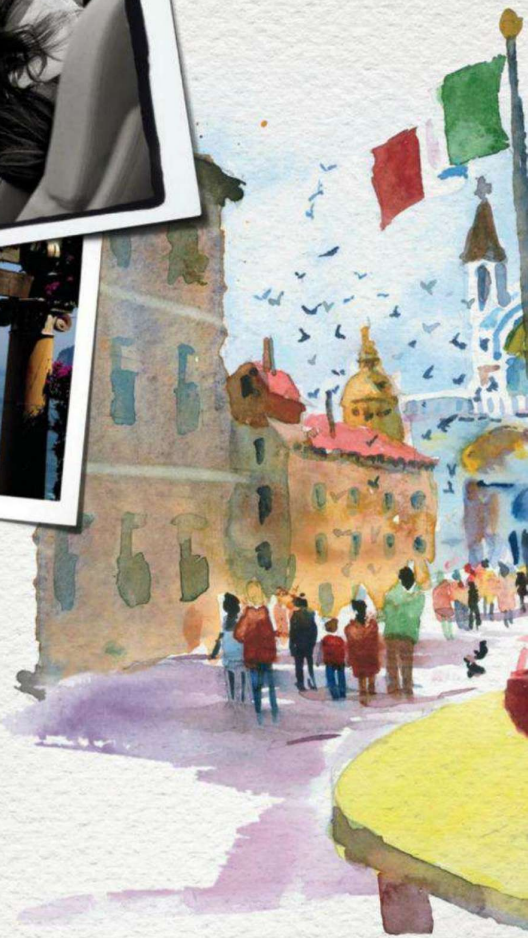
The tiled roofs on these country houses shared the color of the wine we have been sampling in the Vintage Room.



On the terrazzo of a majestic hotel, a newlywed couple is taking their wedding photos. Front row seats. Love is the most splendid show.



Alberto, our head server at Prego, will insist I order my favorite Beef Carpaccio. But after sampling Italian meats for the day, I'm definitely in the mood for seafood!



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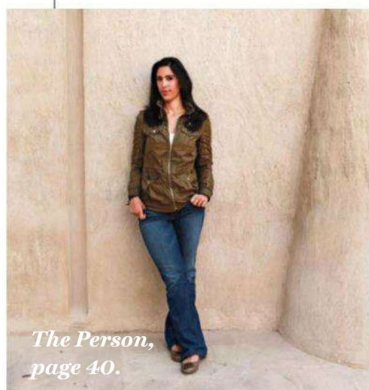


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ON THE COVER: *Mandalay Hill, Myanmar*, by Luca Tettoni/Getty Images.

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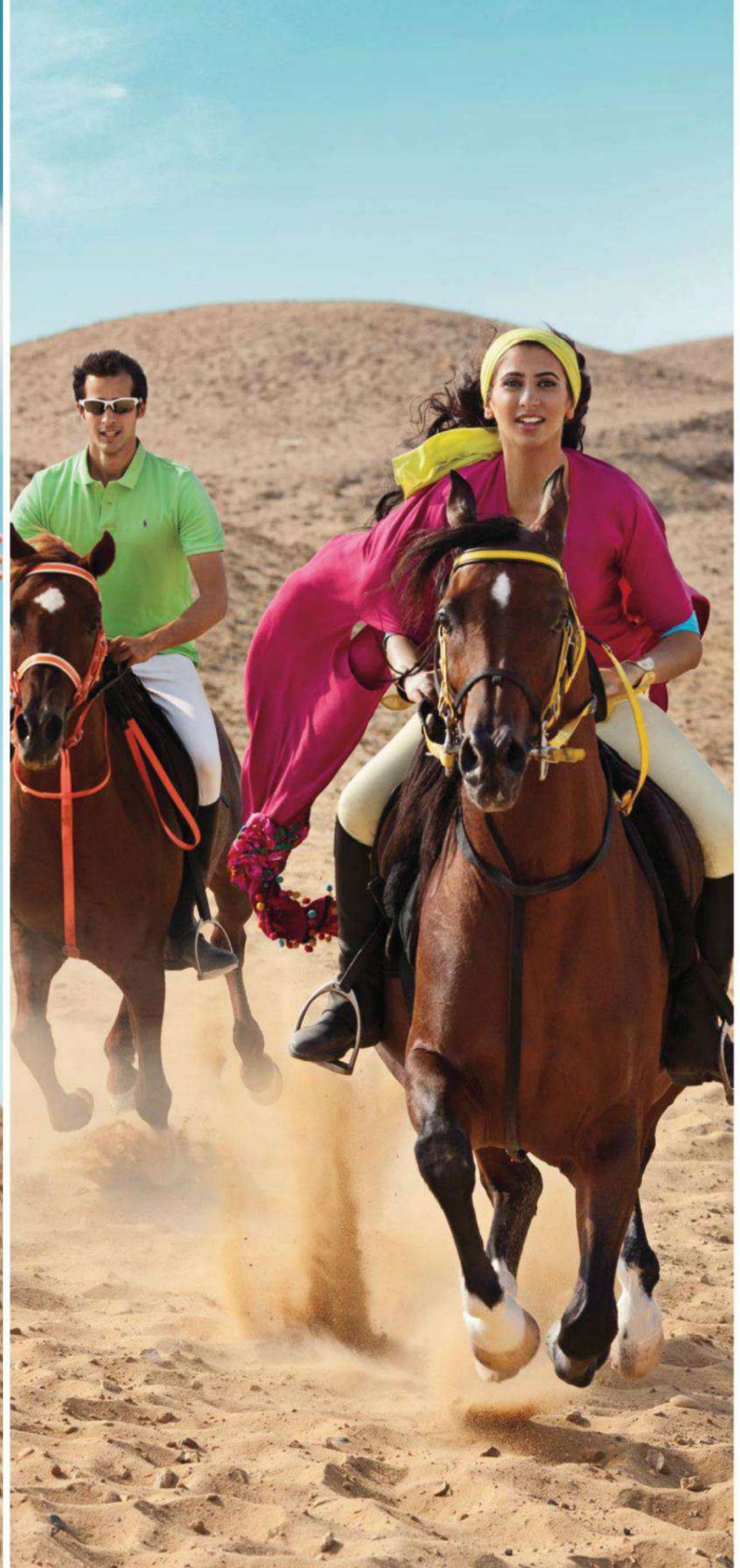
Globally Yours

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egypt
where it all begins

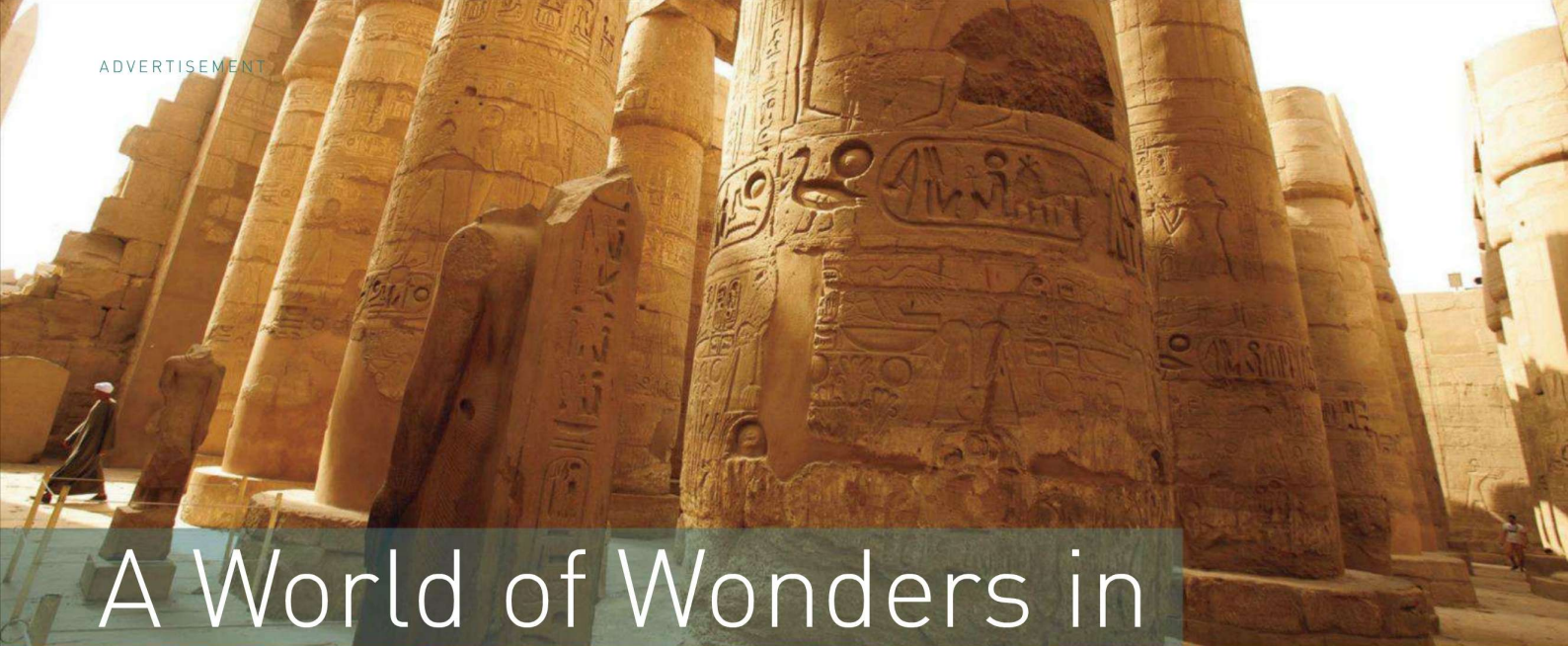
We're Egypt

Hi,
As an Egyptian, I think the Pyramids are more than an ancient world wonder that you see on postcards. The only remaining Old World Wonder is about glorious sunsets, relaxing walks, horseback riding and vitalizing energy. I'm sure you've seen millions of pictures of the Pyramids, right? Well, being here at sunset is like jumpstarting your soul. Now, what picture can do that? Still, it wouldn't hurt to bring a camera.

Cheers!
Youssif

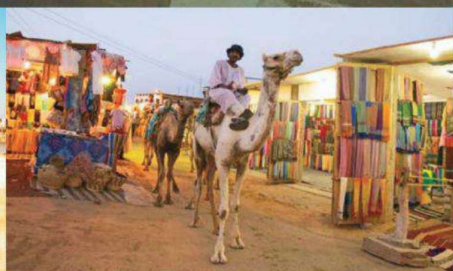
See you in **GIZA**
www.egypt.travel

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where it all begins



A World of Wonders in

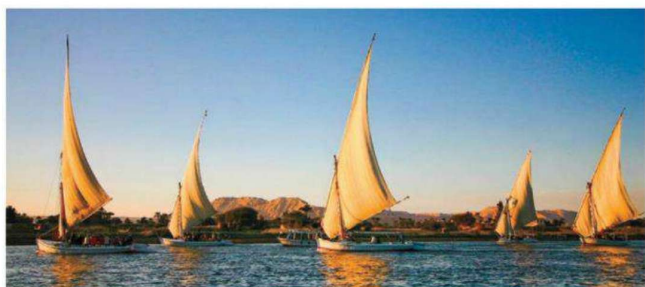
GIZA



When traveling to the land of the Pyramids, the first thing you may hear upon arrival is “*Nawart Masr—you have lit up Egypt.*”

Sharm el-Sheikh (left); the Khan el-Khalili bazaar (right); Luxor, Karnak temple (top)

No matter where your journey takes you, the inherent hospitality of the Egyptian people always has visitors coming back for more. You'll feel it on a tranquil **cruise down the Nile River**, during a snorkeling tour through the pristine waters of **Ras Mohammed National Park** near glamorous **Sharm el-Sheikh**, or while immersing yourself in the ancient history—and romantic atmosphere—of **Aswan**.



Feluccas on the Nile River

But this warmth is perhaps felt strongest in a place that has long captured the world's imagination: the **Great Pyramids of Giza**. Just south of the capital city of Cairo, Giza has become a lively culinary and entertainment destination. Book a guided desert horseback tour out past the noble **Sphinx** and around the Pyramids. After dark, you can witness the multilingual **Pyramids Sound and Light Show**, which illuminates the Pyramids of **Khufu**, **Khafre**, and **Menkaure**, the Sphinx, and other

iconic structures, as the story of ancient Egypt is told. Other fascinating antiquities in Giza include the **Solar Barque Museum**, which displays a restored “solar boat,” one of many that were buried with the pharaohs for their daily voyages across the sky. You can also visit the various queens' Pyramids, which allow access into the sarcophagi of ancient Egypt's most notable women.

At every turn, the helpful spirit and the deep cultural knowledge of each person you meet will make you understand what led travel expert Peter Greenberg to write recently, “*This is the time to go to Egypt.*” As travelers from around the world are planning their return visits to this welcoming land, know that the country's ancient past can be in your future. Explore the countless opportunities that await—as you light up Egypt.

Find out more at www.egypt.travel.



Refreshing mint tea service



The personal obstacles some travelers surmount can seem as challenging as Namibia's dunes.

[EDITOR'S NOTE]

Vital Signs

MEET ED READICKER-HENDERSON. He's the kind of man you don't come across often—a globe-trotter, an irresistible conversationalist, and a complete original. He's quirky and eccentric, sharp and witty, an enigmatic character who lives life large and makes you think about the way you live yours. Ed has enough health problems that you'd assume by now he would have resigned himself to a sedentary life. But no, he's always traveling. And I long wondered why.

"Ed," I asked him one night two years ago, "every time we talk, I get a chronicle of your ailments and afflictions. How can you possibly bear to travel?" (Sounds rude, but we're friends, so I can be blunt.) "I travel," he said, "because it keeps me alive." Bingo. Those of us healthier than Ed, who have a passion for travel, do much the same thing. Travel energizes and enriches us. But for Ed, travel is actually the tonic that keeps him going.

I begged him to write about his life-extending strategy. He refused. "I don't want to think about it," he said. "It would scare me or bring me down. I'd prefer to just go." I pressed him. I told him his story was important: So many people, young and old, abandon travel because they aren't in tip-top shape, because they have a heart condition or some other serious ailment. "Well, I can't not travel," he answered. "I'd die." Precisely. And so, slowly, he came around.

His tale can be an inspiration to us all, healthy or not. Ed travels not just to explore new and distant places but to fathom what makes him tick, what excites him, what challenges him, what changes him, and, ultimately, what keeps him alive. That's the essence, perhaps, of what drives a lot of us to travel—to stay vital. Join Ed's journey on page 104. —KEITH BELLOWES

[FOREIGN DESK]

DISPATCH FROM JERUSALEM

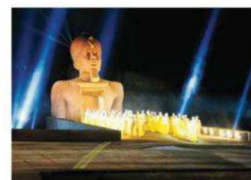
On page 108, writer Michael Rosenfeld compares the Jerusalem of today with his parents' 1950s take. We checked in with our colleague in Tel Aviv, Daphne Raz, the *National Geographic Traveler Israel* editor since its 2001 launch. A former Jerusalem resident for 15 years, Raz shared a few tips:

SMILING AT MONA

On Fridays, eat an early lunch at **Mona** in the Artists' House, next to part of the historic Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design. Then check out the boutiques and art fair on the adjacent pedestrian streets.

ON EXHIBIT

The results of the recent massive renovation of the **Israel Museum** are impressive. My favorites are the archaeology section and the contemporary exhibit halls. There are guided English tours daily.



SOUND GARDEN

Attending a concert in the amphitheater of the **Sultan's Pool** (above) under the starry summer skies—looking up at the illuminated walls of the Old City—is unforgettable.

NEW LITERATI, OLD CITY

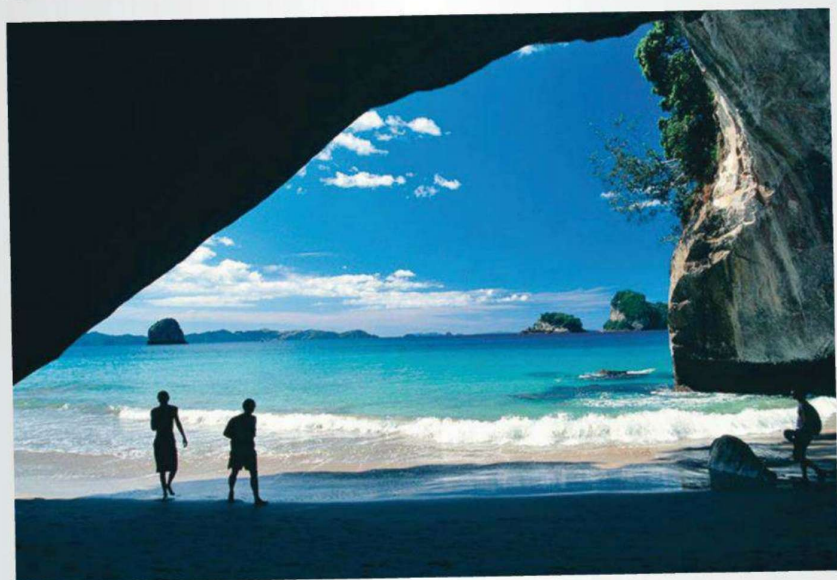
The biennial **Writers Festival** (May 13-18) in the Yemin Moshe neighborhood is a rare chance to hear Israeli and international literary figures.

AN AMERICAN IN JERUSALEM

The **American Colony Hotel** in East Jerusalem is an old-fashioned romantic hideout. You don't have to be a guest to sip coffee in the courtyard and drink in the bar atmosphere at night.

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✓forest-draped fiords

✓world-class wineries
✓culture famous for
a laid-back, friendly
lifestyle

Whether you're seeking rugged outdoor activities or leisurely cultural experiences, New Zealand has it all.

Tracks and Trails

To truly take in the splendor of New Zealand's stunning landscapes, follow the country's extensive hiking and cycle trails for every level. Nine aptly named "Great Walks" include the **Milford Track**, in Fiordland, featuring lush rain forest, waterfalls, and glaciated valleys, and **Tongariro Crossing**, whose volcanoes and crater lakes include scenery well-known to *Lord of the Rings* fans. Prefer two wheels? The vast **New Zealand Cycle Trail** enables you to pedal to historic towns, lakes, mountains, beaches, and more.

Surf and Sand

New Zealand has more coastline than the continental United States, so water activities are always on the agenda. Kayak awe-inspiring **Milford Sound** or the turquoise waters of **Abel Tasman National Park**. If you're into epic surfing, head to Auckland's west coast beaches or two hours south to

Raglan. For wildlife encounters, drive to **Kaikoura**, renowned for its whale-watching cruises, or swim with dolphins in the **Bay of Islands**, an aquatic playground of 144 beautiful islands. Rafters will find thrilling white-water runs outside **Queenstown** or the black-water world of **Waitomo Caves**, famous for the glowworms that light the interiors like stars.

Rich Culture

One of the best ways to discover the country's hospitality is to sip award-winning Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir as you meet local winegrowers along the **Classic New Zealand Wine Trail**. At day's end, yet another New Zealand classic awaits you—a soak in Earth's warm geothermal waters and hot mud pools cherished by the Maori people. For a thousand years, they've reveled in the beauty of

Aotearoa—Land of the Long White Cloud. And so will you.

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Anne-Sophie Latawiec
in Venice.

Behind the Mask

READERS CONNECTED with Sheila Buckmaster's tale of Carnevale masquerading ("Charlie Chaplin's Venice," January-February 2012). Anne-Sophie Latawiec of **Sainte-Luce-sur-Loire, France**, related on a personal level—she was spotted in our pages (above) by a friend. "Morning light wraps a vision in orange in pure mystery," read our photo caption. Shedding her cloak of anonymity, Latawiec explains that her tangerine gown and headpiece were meant to play off the bright hues of Venice's palaces. She attends Carnevale every year, traveling by train with her husband and children. "Taking the costume in luggage is an incredible adventure—a big suitcase for the dress and another for the 'hat,'" she writes.



WHY DID THE TRAVELER CROSS THE ROAD? Frank DiCesare's essay about crossing London's Abbey Road ("A Magical Mystery," January-February 2012) surfaced a

fond travel memory—and source of bragging rights—for Jim Higgins of **Friendswood, Texas**. "In 1973, I had a chance encounter with Paul McCartney at Abbey Road," he wrote. The Beatle obligingly strutted for photos (left).

ON POINT Editor at large Christopher Elliott struck a chord with his column about the confusing world of loyalty programs (The Insider, January-February 2012). "I framed the article," wrote Susan Leslie Wagner of **Tampa, Fla.** "I'm

going to read it every month: Travel for me, not them. I actually yelled at my boss recently when she canceled my trip—it was the last leg I needed to reach elite status."

MEMORY LANE A road trip ("Vintage South Africa," January-February 2012) made one reader nostalgic. "Writer Jackie Caradonio transported me home," wrote Coral Anna Cartwright, now of **Mount Solon, Va.** "As she traversed the Western Cape, where my grandfather owned a wine farm, I could hear the chugging of the boats in the fishing harbor; I remembered hiking up Boyes Drive to the magnificent panorama of False Bay."

ARCHITECTURE SCHOoled In "Charlie Chaplin's Venice," we mistakenly identified architect Andrea Palladio's Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza, Italy, as a theater in the Greek style. Jonathan Abarbanel of **Chicago** pointed out that the correct style is Roman. "Built during the Renaissance from 1580 to 1585," he explains, "this was one of Europe's first new, permanent theaters in a thousand years."

[READER'S CHOICE]

PARADISE FOUND

Where is your perfect beach? Posing that question in the January-February 2012 issue made a splash. Your responses spanned the seas (and lakes):

“

"Hands down, the best beach anywhere is Horse-shoe Bay on Bermuda's south shore: pink sand, blue-green water, and dunes and coves to explore."

ELIZABETH STAFFORD
FRISCO, TEXAS



"Paradise Beach [above] on the Greek island of Mykonos is tranquil and stunning in the early morning."

GINA MATTER
MESA, ARIZ.

"On a hill above a beach in Reykjavik, Iceland, I discovered the perfect view of the midnight sun. A radiant glow on the horizon created red-orange colors that lit up the clouds."

MATT VITUG
ORANGE COUNTY, CALIF.

"Point of Sand on Little Cayman, in the British West Indies, is the next best thing to having a private island. Awesome snorkeling."

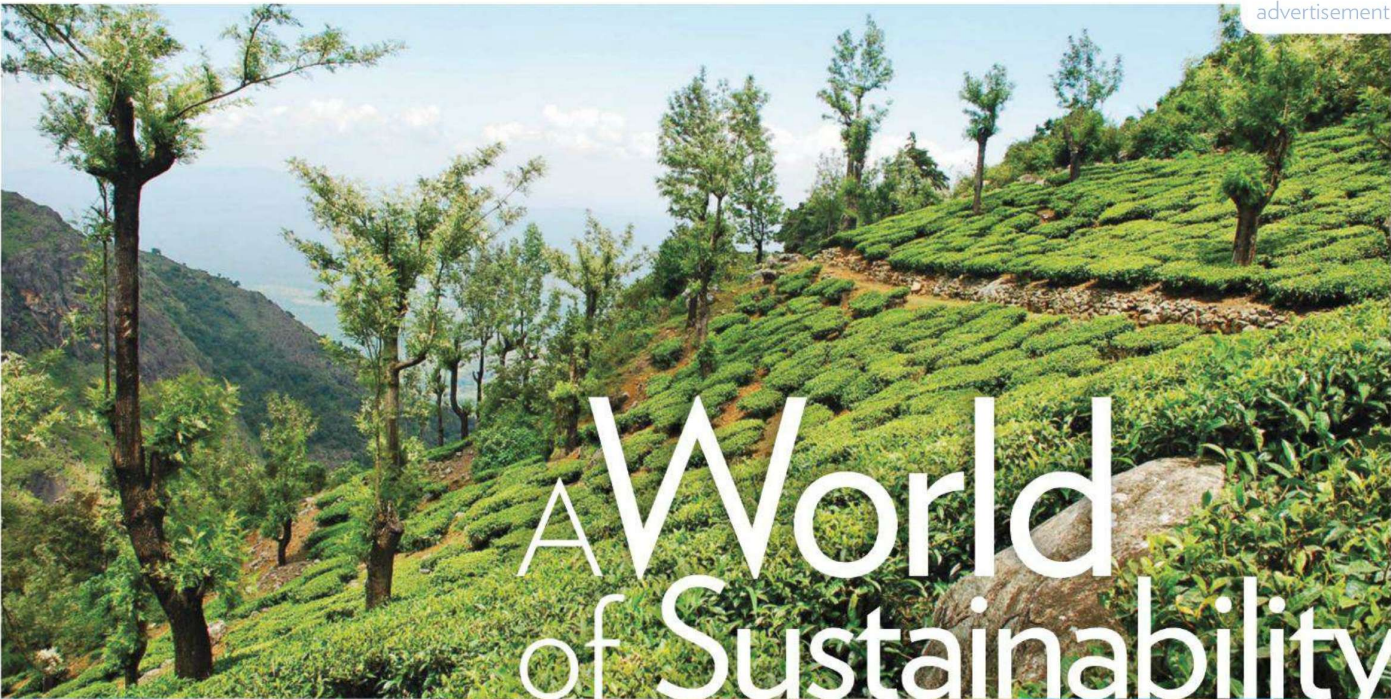
RUTH MERCIER
SEALY, TEXAS

"In my town, secluded Lake Superior beaches are a short hike or kayak away. The cold water is refreshing."

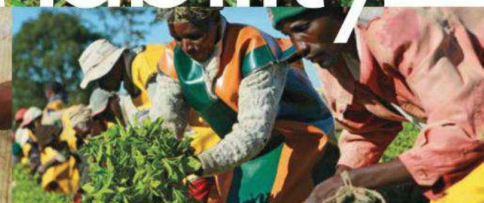
PAMELA KURTZ
MARQUETTE, MICH.

”

NEXT QUESTION: What's your best escape from a big city? E-mail your tips and photos to Travel_talk@ngs.org.



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FOR TWO AND A HALF DECADES the **Rainforest Alliance** has worked globally to stop deforestation by developing innovative and sustainable alternatives to forestry, agriculture, and tourism. Through certification and verification, we provide forest managers, farmers, and tourism entrepreneurs with the tools to manage their lands responsibly. This also helps to ensure that workers and their families are well treated and enjoy decent housing, education, and health care. Already, more than two million farmers, farmworkers, and their families directly benefit from Rainforest Alliance certification, and **more than 170 million acres of land in a hundred countries are sustainably managed.**

Understanding that business as usual is no longer an option, companies are teaming up with the Rainforest Alliance to identify sustainable sources and adopt sustainable practices. **Lipton®**, for example, has committed to source 100 percent of its tea from Rainforest Alliance Certified™ farms by 2015. And the **Mexico Tourism Board** has been working with the Rainforest Alliance to bring lessons on sustainable tourism directly to over 30 hotels and tourism businesses in southern Mexico.

Consumers can play a lead role in transforming our global marketplace into a more sustainable model. By choosing products and services that bear the Rainforest Alliance Certified seal or the Rainforest Alliance Verified™ mark, consumers are rewarding farmers, foresters, and business owners for their hard work adopting sustainable practices that improve livelihoods and support a healthier planet.





Hacienda Santa Rosa, near Mérida



YOU DON'T HAVE TO TRAVEL

far in Mexico to move from rare rain forest to pristine beach to mountain splendor to desert realm. This is a land of magic, full of nature's grandest diversity and people committed to preserving it.

Mexico

The Place You Thought You Knew

Beauty Is Preserved in the Yucatán Peninsula

There's no better way to revel in that diversity and support sustainability than a trip to the legendary **Yucatán Peninsula**. It's a short flight from Mexico City to **Mérida**, Yucatán's "White City" of historic churches and markets and its own sustainability pedigree—it's been around for almost 600 years! A quick drive west of the city, the Gulf Coast beckons with glimmering beaches and a riotous wealth of wildlife, from the 20,000 flamingos that flock to the **Ría Celestún Biosphere Reserve** to nest and feed each year to the boat-size whale sharks that congregate by the thousands in the waters around **Isla Holbox**, at the top of the Peninsula. Take a quick ferry out to the island, part of another biosphere reserve, and you can swim with these gentle giants and enjoy the swoop of pelicans, ibises, and frigatebirds overhead.

Next, head south along the Yucatán Peninsula's Caribbean coast—the renowned **Riviera Maya**—to **Xel-Há eco-park**, the biggest natural aquatic park in the world. You could spend a day or days exploring its endless lagoons and inlets, caves and cenotes. But save time for the nearby **Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve**, 1.3 million acres of forest, wetland, and coast. On a moonlight stroll along the beach, you might just see nesting green or loggerhead turtles, a perfect ending to an exciting Yucatán Peninsula adventure.



Cenote, Xel-Há Park



Cantón Palace, Mérida



THE PLACE YOU THOUGHT YOU KNEW
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Green Macaw, Xel-Há Park

RAINFOREST ALLIANCE Honors Resort in Riviera Maya



FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER, the Rainforest Alliance has recognized a tourist area for its sustainability practices when it recently honored Mayakoba Tourism Development with a Sustainable Standard-Setter Award. Located in the heart of Mexico's Riviera Maya, the resort has been carefully planned to preserve its Caribbean beaches, lagoons, and mangrove forests.

The three hotels on the 593-acre property—Fairmont Mayakoba, Rosewood Mayakoba, and Banyan Tree Mayakoba Hotels—have taken a variety of measures to ensure their sustainability. These include implementing water- and energy-saving practices, promoting visits to local communities, and administering strong and well-documented sustainability policies and procedures.



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THE AMARATUNGA FAMILY

lives in the village of Kukawa, in the island nation of Sri Lanka. On their small plot of land, they grow peppers, coconuts, spices, and tea. Recently, the family—along with 1,370 smallholders like themselves—earned **Rainforest Alliance** certification for complying with rigorous environmental sustainability standards. They now sell their tea to **Lipton®** which means that they will be able to send their two children to school.

Since 2007, Lipton® has purchased tea from farmers who have earned the Rainforest Alliance Certified™ seal, ensuring the plant grows in harmony with

nature. The result: Soils are protected, waterways run clean, trash is reduced and recycled, wildlife and habitat is conserved, and carbon gases are sequestered. These practices also help ensure that Lipton® teas maintain a consistent standard of high quality and premium flavor.

In addition to purchasing tea from smallholder farmers, Lipton® also sources tea from its 32,000-acre **Kericho estate** in Kenya, which was the world's first tea estate to earn Rainforest Alliance certification. From here, tea leaves are transported directly from field to processing plant, where nothing is added or removed.

Furthermore, over 100,000 families on Lipton® tea estates benefit from housing, healthcare, and education provided by Lipton®.

Currently, 75 percent of Lipton® leaf tea in the United States is sourced from Rainforest Alliance Certified™ farms, and Lipton® is on track to reach the goal of 100 percent by 2015. As the largest buyer of tea in the world, Lipton® can help farmers produce better crops, protect their lands, and earn decent livelihoods. For smallholders like the Amaratungas, that makes a world of difference.



Fertilizer bags act as planters to reduce waste of inorganic materials



Panoramic of Sri Lankan tea farm

About the RAINFOREST ALLIANCE



170 MILLION ACRES of Rainforest Alliance Certified™ forests and farms are protecting threatened and endangered species, conserving critical habitat, and improving the quality of life for farm families and forest communities. The little green frog seal is your assurance that goods are produced sustainably. Find out more at www.rainforest-alliance.org.



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New Orleans EVENTS CALENDAR

Do whatcha wanna.

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MAY 22-26
- ▶ LOUISIANA SEAFOOD FESTIVAL
JUNE 8-10
- ▶ CREOLE TOMATO FESTIVAL
JUNE 9-10
- ▶ CAJUN-ZYDECO FESTIVAL
JUNE 9-10
- ▶ ESSENCE MUSIC FESTIVAL
JULY 6-8
- ▶ TALES OF THE COCKTAIL
JULY 25-29
- ▶ COOLINARY NEW ORLEANS
AUGUST 1-31
- ▶ SATCHMO SUMMERFEST
AUGUST 2-5
- ▶ WHITNEY WHITE LINEN NIGHT
AUGUST 4



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Home to Zion, Bryce Canyon, Arches, Canyonlands, and Capitol Reef National Parks, Utah's natural landscapes are as diverse as they are stunning. Plus, many of Utah's 43 state parks, seven national monuments, and five national recreation areas rival national parks for scenic vistas and adventure.

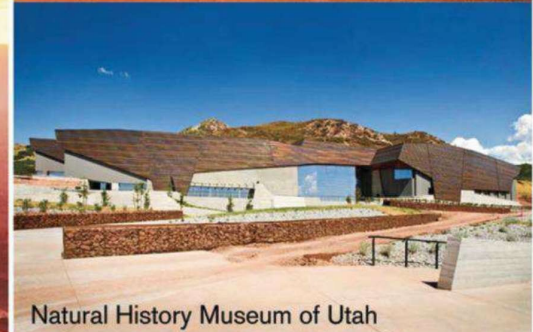
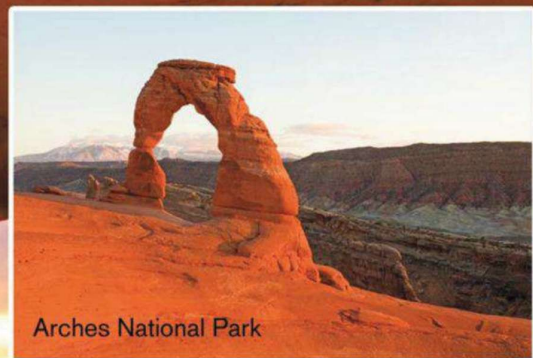
Utah welcomes three new science-centric destinations for families to explore! The brand new Quarry Visitor's Center and Grand Exhibit Hall at Dinosaur National Monument captivates visitors with exhibits that highlight Utah's paleontological past and provides access to the world-famous "wall of bones" – a cliff wall of thousands of fossils still embedded in the Earth! Salt Lake City celebrated the opening of two new fantastic museums in the fall of 2011. The new Natural History Museum of Utah highlights Utah's unique geology, biology, and anthropology in a state-of-the-art facility set at the foothills of the majestic Wasatch Mountains. The Leonardo is a stylish and ambitious attraction that allows visitors of all ages to explore science, technology, and art with its creative exhibitions.

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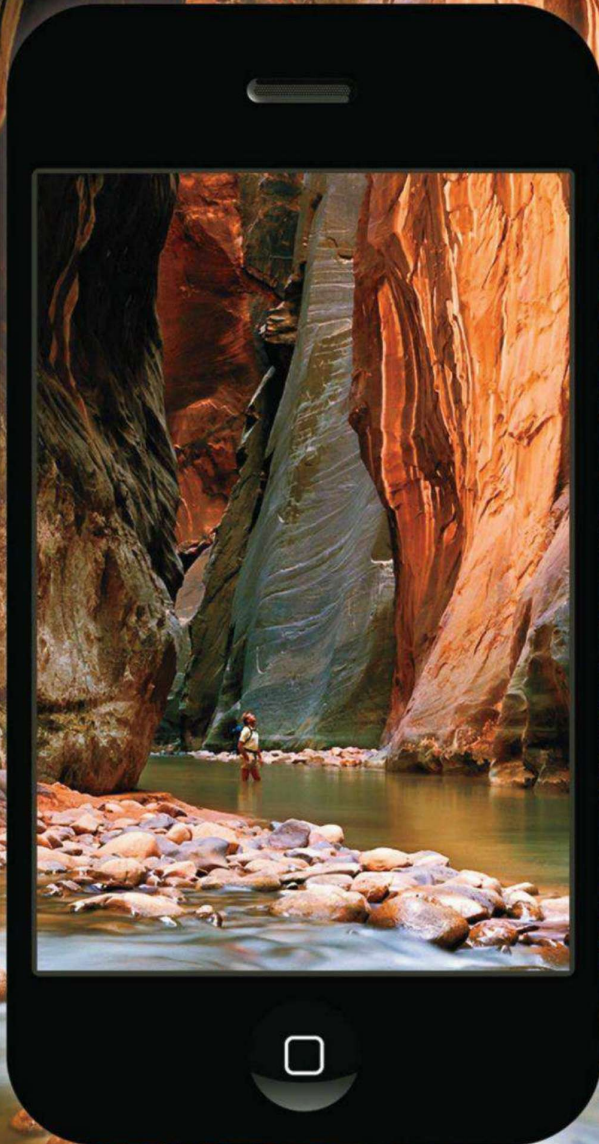
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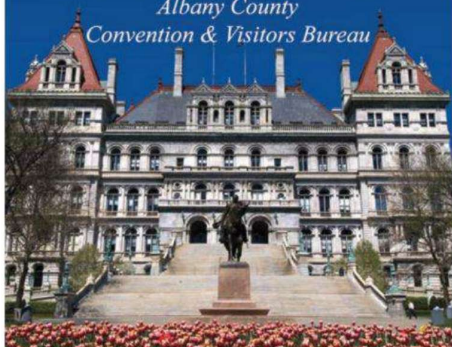
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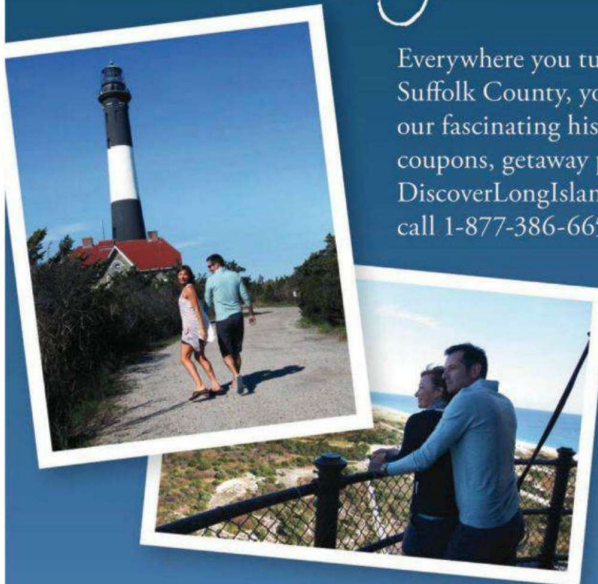
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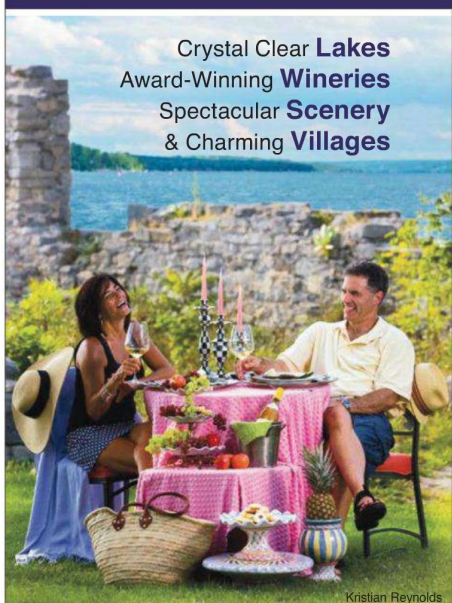


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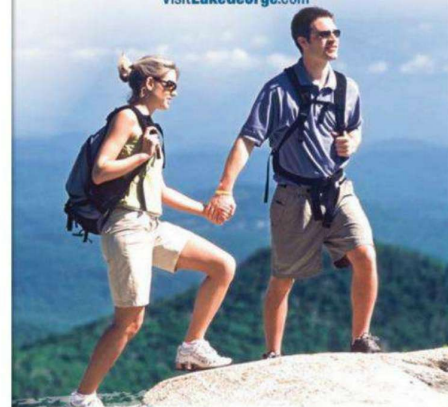
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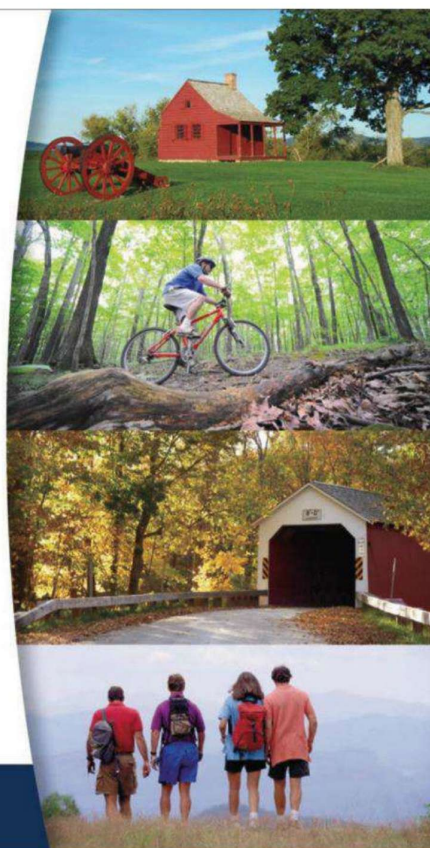
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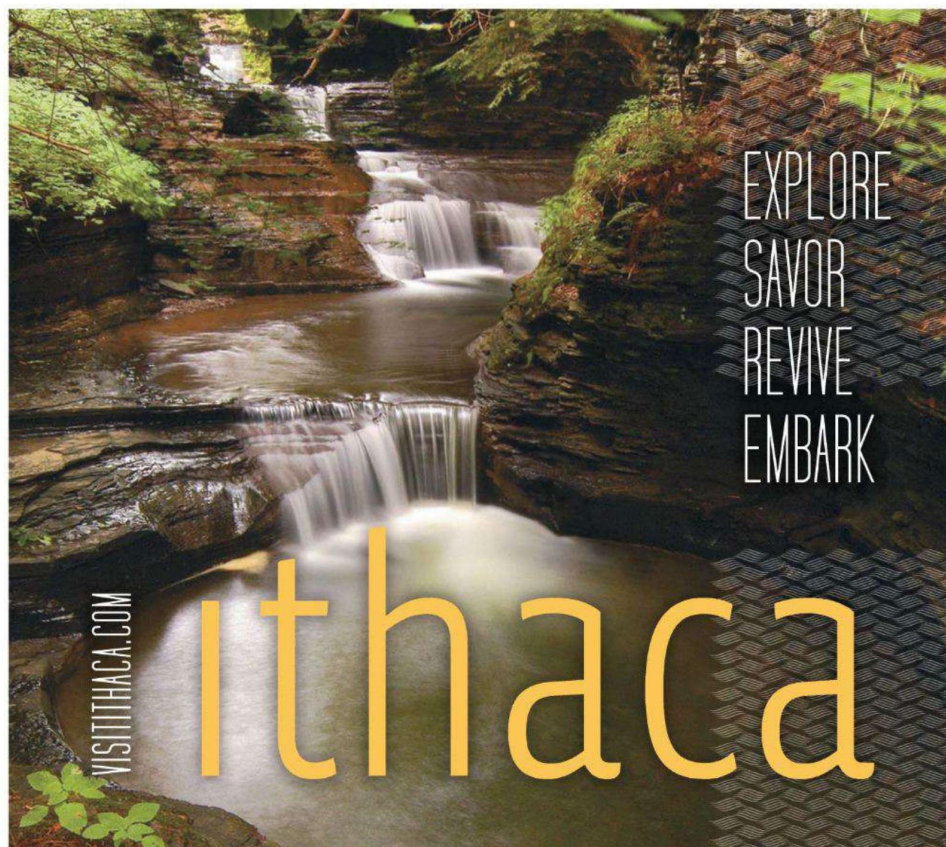
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Straddling the striking south-western coast, **STAVANGER** blends the best of Norway old and new, natural and nurtured. The country's oldest cathedral holds court over a charming, ancient city center that's also the nexus of a burgeoning culinary scene. But Stavanger is more than just history, culture, and cuisine. Sandy beaches, plunging waterfalls, and scenic roadways dot a surrounding countryside that culminates in the mighty Lysefjord and towering peaks like Pulpit Rock and Kjerag Mountain. www.regionstavanger.com

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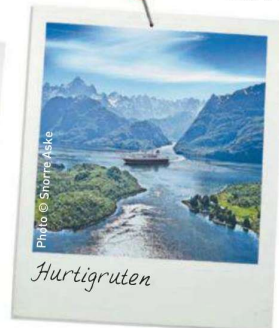
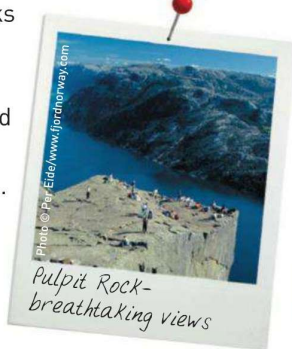
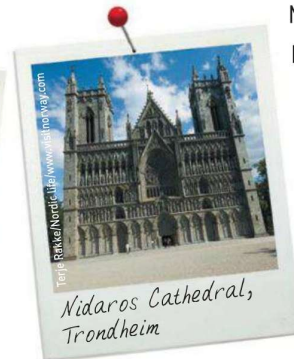
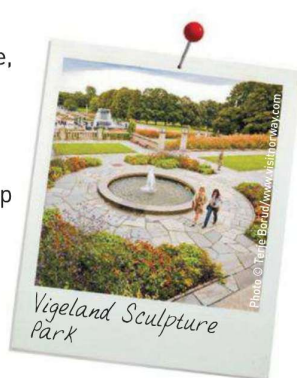
Norway's first capital, founded by a Viking king, and one of medieval Europe's leading pilgrimage sites, **TRONDHEIM** has today lost none of its appeal—for natives and visitors alike. Wide, stately streets lead to architectural wonders like

Nidaros Cathedral and the Archbishop's Palace, not to mention humble but colorful wooden homes. An inventive university town, Trondheim even boasts a few one-of-a-kind quirks, like the world's first bicycle lift. Rent some wheels and try it out for yourself.

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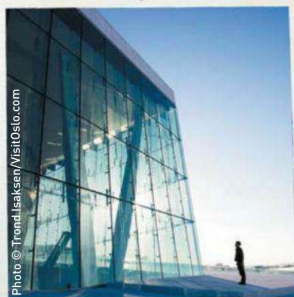
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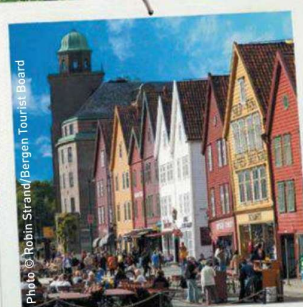
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WITH THE NEW 870-mile **All Wales Coast Path**, which joins with the 177-mile Offa's Dyke Path that runs north to south along the Anglo-Welsh border, "you can walk the shape of the nation for the first time," says Jane Davidson, president of the Ramblers walking club in Wales. Five years in the making, the Coast Path, which officially opens May 5, would take almost three months to walk, but there are plenty of easier hikes. The Gower Peninsula stretches west from Swansea and is made for weekend walkers, with routes that amble past woodlands, dunes, and grass-fringed cliff tops. Farther west, the literary-minded can follow the path to Dylan Thomas's boathouse home and writing shed in Laugharne, with views of his "fishingboat-bobbing sea." Sheer variety is the path's strength. From discovering castles like Caernarfon to cycling Carmarthenshire's seafront or walking the tidal breakwater across Cardiff Bay, you'll end up longing to return. The Welsh call that longing *hiraeth*, the heartfelt affinity with the land that keeps pulling them home. —JULIANA GILLING



WILFRID/GETTY IMAGES

On the Gower Peninsula, a walk along Rhossili Down leads to a wide beach with the remains of a 19th-century shipwreck.

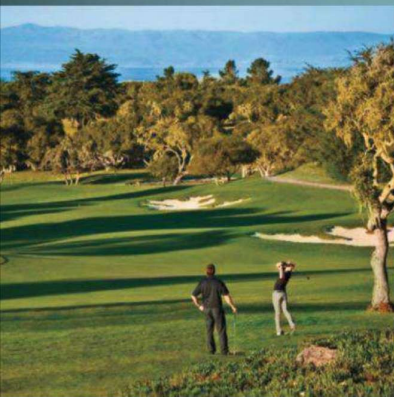


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THE DISH

Secrets of the Savory Sisterhood

THE ONLY HAPPY OFFSHOOT of Mexican machismo, which continues to find the matriarch shooing men away from the larders, may be that **Mexico City's culinary scene** is dominated by women. Chef Gabriela Cámara's inaugural outpost, Contramar, in the central Roma Norte area, is a seafood shack fashioned with all the sand-in-your-toes freshness of a beachside *palapa*. (Order Cámara's signature tuna sashimi tostadas.) Martha Ortiz Chapa, helming restaurant Dulce Patria in posh Polanco, presents a new-wave take on Mexican classics: Oaxacan cheese-and-*epazote* quesadillas, salads spiked with hibiscus flowers and desert-flower hearts, mescal-and-guava margaritas. Nearby, Patricia Quintana, known as the first lady of Mexican gastronomy, heads ten-year-old Izote, with its modern twists on pre-Columbian dishes. Also in Polanco, try the 36-ingredient mole de Xico or the chocolate *tartaleta* at Carmen (Titita) Ramírez Degollado's El Bajío. "Mexican food is about secrets and power passed down the maternal line," says Dulce Patria's Ortiz. "It's like a beautiful whisper." —OLIVIA STREN

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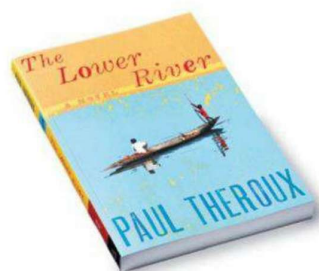




THE BUY

Games Goodies

London's Olympic merchandise field is packed with competitors. Everything from plush toys to jeweled charms carries the images of this year's Olympic and Paralympic mascots, Wenlock and Mandeville. Other items—coasters and posters, pillows and throws—show off the 2012 logo. But our favorite Olympic find is the set of **porcelain egg cups** (above) decorated with the Union Jack in bold colors. —*Meghan Miner*



THE BOOK

Theroux's Latest

Paul Theroux sets his new novel, *The Lower River*, in a sun-beaten place of mud huts, withered mopani trees, and ancient beliefs. The plot follows a 62-year-old, newly divorced Massachusetts clothier who decides to return to the place where he was happiest, a remote village in Malawi, where he had served as a Peace Corps volunteer. The journey generates a chain of unexpected entanglements. The real-life inspiration? Like his protagonist, Theroux grew up in Massachusetts and was a Peace Corps volunteer in Malawi. —*Don George*

THE DATE

Barnes Raising in Philly

THE BARNES FOUNDATION'S cache of Impressionist and early modern paintings sheds its suburban shell on **May 19** to emerge on Philadelphia's central Benjamin Franklin Parkway. Bucking prim gallery conventions, in the 1920s pharmaceutical magnate Albert C. Barnes famously hung his Matisse and Cézannes cheek by jowl with decorative ironwork and tribal African masks, observing color or form as unifying elements. In his will, Barnes stipulated to keep his paintings "in exactly the places they are," but a 2004 court ruling cleared the way for the move—to the outrage of many in the art and preservation worlds. Yet for all its controversy, the sleek new space rewards travelers. The Barnes replicates the size and idiosyncratic configurations of the original galleries, retaining a salon style while evolving from its previous life as an educational center with limited visitor hours. Designed to earn LEED platinum eco-credentials, the building features a sophisticated etched-glass canopy that lets in sunlight (but not UV rays), a dramatic change from the few shaded windows of the beaux arts former home. Says co-architect Billie Tsien, "It almost feels as if the paintings have been cleaned, as if they are new. They come to life." Free admission May 26-28. —*CAROLINE TIGER*



Matisse crowns a gallery at the original Barnes.



Jungfrauoch: Sphinx Observatory and Glacier Restaurant with view over the Aletsch Glacier

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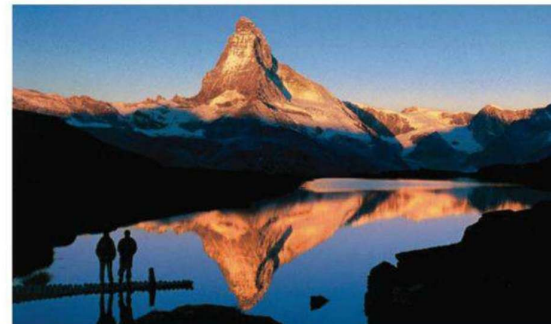
Impressive mountains, crystal-clear Alpine lakes, a vast variety of leisure activities and a wide range of accommodation make the Interlaken/Jungfrau Region a summer vacation destination with a difference. Interlaken, the adventure capital of Europe is situated between the Lakes of Thun and Brienz and at the foot of the famous trio of peaks, the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau. The resorts of Grindelwald, Wengen, Mürren and Lauterbrunnen offer 300 miles of marked hiking and biking paths.

The famous Jungfrau Railway takes you up to the highest railway station in Europe at 11,333 feet – Top of Europe! Eternal ice and snow is guaranteed in that high Alpine wonderland, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Breath-taking views from the Sphinx observation terrace extend across the Swiss borders. The Jungfrau Railway is currently celebrating its Centenary.

Lake Geneva & Matterhorn Region

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With its lakes and mountains, vineyards and valleys, the Lake Geneva & Matterhorn Region rewards the senses - even before you try the local fare and unrivaled wines. No less than 26 restaurants awarded with Michelin stars position the Lake Geneva & Matterhorn Region as the very best “gastronomic destination” in all of Switzerland. The region also has one of the world’s highest concentrations of museums, including Geneva’s International Museum of the Reformation, the Olympic Museum and the art museum Fondation de l’Hermitage in Lausanne and the Giannadda Foundation in Martigny.



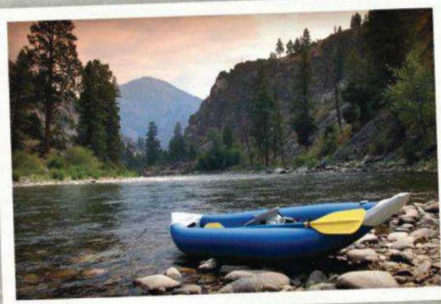
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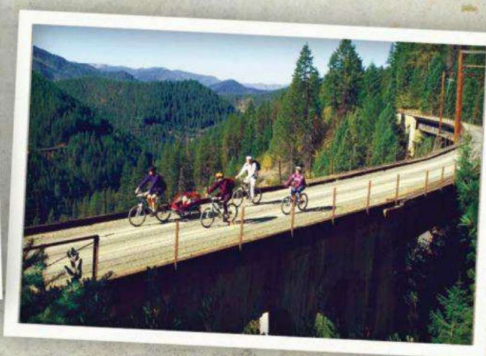
Hiking and backpacking are great ways to experience the state from the ground up. Idaho's jaw-dropping granite peaks, high-mountain lakes and verdant meadows abound. But there's much more to explore—rock climbing, camping, world-class whitewater rafting, flyfishing on blue ribbon trout streams. You can access central Idaho via direct flights to Boise, eastern Idaho through Idaho Falls and Salt Lake City, UT or travel to northern Idaho and depart from Spokane, WA.

Take a look at some of Idaho's must-do adventures.



✧ CENTRAL IDAHO

From sophisticated ski resorts to guest ranches, bed-and-breakfast inns, and campgrounds, choose central Idaho for a variety of family adventures. Sun Valley—America's first ski resort—attracts visitors from all over the world year round. The awe-inspiring peaks of the Boulder, White Cloud, Lost River, Lemhi and Sawtooth ranges make this region Idaho's most mountainous. Idaho's highest peak, Mount Borah, towers 12,662 feet above the valley floor near Mackay. Thousands of alpine lakes are nestled between the jagged peaks of the Sawtooth Mountains near the town of Stanley. Elk, deer and moose graze in the meadow while antelope sprint across the open plains. Lewis and Clark, along with Sacajawea, crossed Idaho here on their journey to find a Pacific Northwest passage. The region is perfect for outdoor activities including rafting, horseback riding, climbing, hiking and canoeing. The heart of Idaho will certainly inspire your own "inner adventurer."



✧ NORTHERN IDAHO

Scattered across the northern Idaho region are meandering rivers and lakes of all sizes; some are America's largest and most pristine, while others are remote and intimate. Priest, Coeur d'Alene, Sandpoint, and Pend Oreille have resorts and marinas along their shorelines, with ambiance from rustic to regal. But not everything in northern Idaho is on the water. There are dude ranches, superb golf courses, theme parks, scenic drives, state parks, numerous campsites and an abundance of recreation, including two of Idaho's best biking trails, Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes and the high mountain Route of Hiawatha. Outstanding recreation, breathtaking scenery, a rich and diverse history, and welcoming communities make northern Idaho the perfect setting for a family vacation.



✧ EASTERN IDAHO

Open space surrounds the winding Snake River and hosts the production of Idaho's claim to fame—the Idaho potato. But it's the nearby mountains that give this part of the state its scenic character. Eastern Idaho has always attracted adventurers. It's a land where snowcapped peaks of the Grand Tetons feed thundering waterfalls, glistening lakes, and free-flowing rivers. It's a place where elk and moose graze lazily in the grasslands, a spot where you can watch wild swans fly and eagles soar. It's an accessible area that, to this day, remains uncompromised. As a neighbor to the Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks, it shares much of the same spectacular beauty and awesome adventure... but without the crowds.

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THE IDEA

Supercharged Swiss Wheels

APPLY SWISS INGENUITY and an active love of the outdoors to a landscape profuse with mountains, and you get the rechargeable **Swiss electric bike**. These cycles have been growing in popularity throughout Europe, but leave it to the Swiss to fine-tune them and to create what may be the most extensive support network of marked trails anywhere in the world. Ubiquitous battery-charging stations along the trails make long trips feasible, as do groups such as Swiss Trails, which can provide daily luggage transport. With more than 400 rental stations across Switzerland, the newest versions of e-bikes boost pedal stroke up to 150 percent with the push of a button. They guarantee that even less fit riders can attack harrowing inclines with the grace of a Lance Armstrong. But athletes, too, sing their wheelie praises. “I felt a little bit as if I was cheating, but my Swiss Flyer was more like insurance,” says college student Lizzy Williams, who rode from Basel through the hair-raising Gotthard Pass to Lugano. —BECCA HENSLEY

An e-biker crosses a stream at the Grosse Scheidegg Pass.

TOMAS VAN HOUTRYVE/NEW YORK TIMES/REDOX

THE PERSON

Citizen Journalist

By Keith Bellows

LARA SETRAKIAN'S outlook is simple: You have to know the world to see the story. Based in Dubai, the 30-year-old foreign correspondent for Bloomberg Television and ABC News chases news from every angle, whether reporting live from Cairo's Tahrir Square, hopping on the next plane to Mumbai, or tapping into the pulse of her 36,000 Twitter followers. Fluent in English, Arabic, Armenian, French, and Spanish, Setrakian tracks down stories the way she travels—with both ears to the ground.

What kind of a traveler are you? I experience a place through language, meaning I try to capture a culture in its turns of phrases and philosophies. I like to listen to how things are expressed, such as the way a culture says "Hello." In Arabic, it's *"Ahlan, wa-sahlan."* "Ahlan" can mean family; "sahlan" can refer to a flat plain. It's the way they're hospitable—in effect saying there are no borders or barriers between us.

Some Americans are afraid to travel to the Middle East. Fear is amplified with distance. When you get up close, you

can evaluate the objective volume and not the subjective fear. Then you can understand the nature of the danger and take steps to protect yourself.

Ever felt in danger while reporting? In Egypt during the revolution, we women faced a radical scenario. In a lawless situation where emotion is at the extreme—whether euphoria or anger—one can feel very vulnerable and jittery, as if you want eyes on the back of your head.

What else have you learned from traveling through developing countries? Slowly, I've become a master of the work-around—working around anything that gets in the way gives a kind of Zen

acceptance for anything that isn't perfectly polished. That "of course we'll manage" paradigm is the biggest gift.

Have any experiences been transformative? Definitely my first trip to Iran: swallowing the notion of going to the other side of the spectrum of what felt natural or comfortable and knowing that, wow, I really get to digest the furthest perspective from mine.

How does Dubai compare with your home of New York? Sometimes it feels as if I'm either in New York or I'm in the world. What Dubai does brilliantly is point you to other places: I have two-thirds of the world's people within eight hours [by air]. Here you feel the vibrations—this is the world on a platter. It's irresistible.



*Lara Setrakian
reports from Dubai.*

PHOTO CREDIT

THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Buenos Aires Soul

IN THE MID-19TH century, Buenos Aires's wealthiest families lived in **San Telmo**, south of downtown. But an 1870s yellow fever epidemic sent the well-to-do packing, their former digs repopulated by Spanish and Italian immigrants. The resulting cultural stew gave rise to tango and a robust street life. Today, crumbling mansions lining the cobblestone streets are being renovated to house cutting-edge restaurants and indie shops. "There's a reevaluation of the historical center of the city," says Aldo Graziani, owner of Aldo's Vinoteca. "San Telmo is the summary of who we are in Buenos Aires." Walking San Telmo reveals how Argentina's capital looks toward the future while holding on to its past.

Museo de la Ciudad (1) Nicknamed Buenos Aires's attic, this kitschy museum displays homey hundred-year-old objects such as porcelain

and lace dolls, dishes, and bicycles—many from Italian immigrants. A working vintage pharmacy features a ceiling adorned in art nouveau paintings of sinuous foliage.

Aldo's Vinoteca (2) Wine bar and restaurant Aldo's boasts a 500-bottle wine list, presented on an iPad, which highlights top producers from Argentine wine regions Mendoza, Neuquén, and Cafayate. Young, casual patrons pair selections with steaks and Mediterranean cuisine.

Boutique Pablo Ramírez (3) Ramírez's classic tailored designs for women are high fashion with value. He chose San Telmo for his store location because the area "has a lot of poetry and a soul." Every clothing design comes in travel-friendly black.

Nora Iniesta (4) Nora Iniesta incorporates found objects (buttons, toys) and historical

Argentine subjects—including iconic images of beloved former first lady Evita Perón—into her paintings, decorative objects, and clothing accessories. Her appointment-only boutique makes a great stop for arty souvenirs.

La Vineria de Gualterio Bolívar (5) Buenos Aires excels at experimental cuisine, exemplified by this tiny, easily missed bistro. Chef Alejandro Digilio applies molecular cooking principles, using few ingredients but each with strong flavor contrasts. Try the prawns with black garlic and mushrooms.

San Telmo Antiques Fair (6) This Sunday-only antiques, leather, and crafts fair centers on Plaza Dorrego, where an open-air tango event also takes place. Scour stalls for items such as old political buttons and Argentine comic books. —*Michael Luongo*



On Sundays, Plaza Dorrego and surrounding streets become an art and antiques market.



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SCRIPT YOUR MONTANA STORY

By Alan Kesselheim



Hiking near Stoney Indian Lake, Glacier National Park

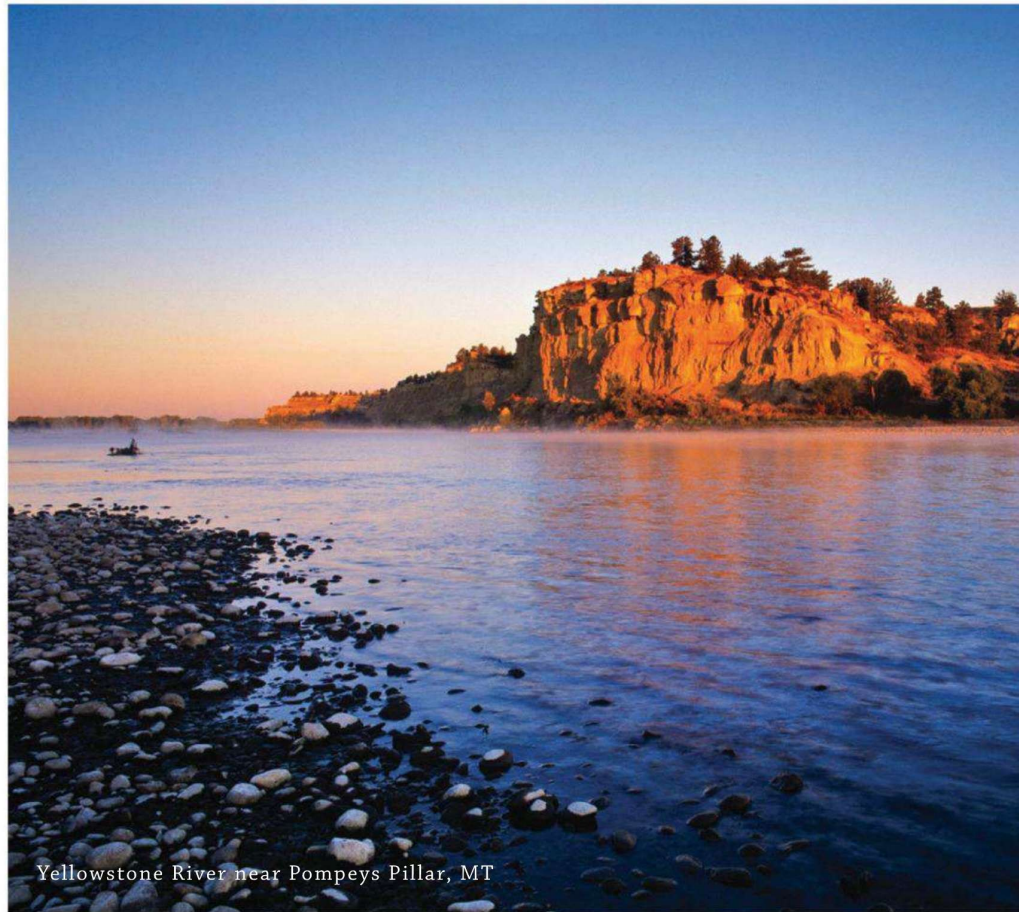
In Montana the stories lie around everywhere, waiting to be picked up and revealed. They litter the landscape, especially this landscape – the human stories are woven in with this sweeping, ambitious, hardscrabble place. Here, the land is also a character. It molds people. It demands a response. It is both a seduction and a challenge. None of it feels small.

A three-generation passion for Yellowstone River agates in eastern Montana. A construction worker in Butte fascinated by all the stuff he found in the basements of remodel projects and decided to start guiding historic tours. Native stories, stories of transplants, immigrants, people who stop in and then never leave. Blend those with the nuggets of landscape – the tundra grandeur of Logan Pass in Glacier National Park, the sweep of the Yellowstone River scribing 500 miles across the state, the heart-swelling prairie near the Great Falls of the Missouri, the Lamar Valley of Yellowstone National Park.

Put people and place together and it gets, well, kind of heroic. Put yourself in Montana. Follow these stories and then script your own.



AN EASTERN MONTANA MEANDER
A place where the landscape is dominated by the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers. These watersheds



Yellowstone River near Pompeys Pillar, MT

and their tributaries coil through cottonwood groves, water the state's agriculture, sculpt the land into coulees and draws and 'breaks'. Follow the bends, through towns named after men who played a role in the history of the West – Custer, Sidney, Miles City, Forsyth. Places where people's lives are braided in with the currents of the rivers.

People like the Harmon family, a three-generation-deep fascination with the beautiful moss agates found in the gravel of the Yellowstone River. Tom Harmon began the tradition, growing up in northeastern Montana and spending his childhood scouring the river for beautiful rocks. His boyhood habit became his lifework. Harmon began working with agates; polishing, cutting, and creating jewelry out of the unique patterns. He was self-taught, finding his way by trial and error, stumbling across unexpected beauty, and eventually earning national recognition among the rock-hounding elite. He opened his first shop in 1970.

Harmon's work continued to evolve over the years. His shop became a museum and his work became more art than hobby. Tom's son, Jim, took up the torch, joining the family business in 1992, and has carried on the tradition, bringing his own vision and artistry to the mix. Several of the Harmon grandkids now work in the business, and the shop has moved to Sidney, where the passion carries on in the museum and rock store, Harmon's Agate & Silver.

What inspires the Harmon family, and what still has the power to inspire, are the currents flowing through Montana. It's worth stopping in one of those towns, finding a river access, hunting on gravel bars for the moss agates and petrified wood the lower Yellowstone is famous for, listening to the breezes in the cottonwoods. The river will refresh and the communities it winds past brim with authentic events and places to stay. Like the annual Bucking Horse Sale,

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a springtime Miles City tradition going back more than six decades and the Olive Hotel on Main Street, restored to rustic frontier elegance. Or one of the many museums and rock shops, like Carter County Museum in remote Ekalaka, in far southeastern Montana, where Teddy Roosevelt indulged his hunting safaris more than a century ago.

To truly grasp the nature of Big Sky Country, drive west from Sidney across the High Plains of Montana on Highway 200. Fields of wheat and grass ripple in the summer winds, red-tailed hawks scream overhead, western meadowlarks sing from fence posts. Stop somewhere to sample the oceanic space and summer silence. Make sure you gas up, because towns like Circle and Jordan are few and far between, embraced by the sweep of prairie, the meander of the Mussleshell River, and the distant rise of the Snowy Mountains.

Remember, travel is all about following whims... so detour north up Highway 191 to explore the C.M. Russell Wildlife Refuge, in the heart of the Missouri Breaks. The Loop Road roams through prairie dog towns and black-footed ferret habitat, winding through coulees and plateaus carved by the storied Missouri River. It doesn't take much to imagine the Lewis and Clark Expedition camped in one of the riverside cottonwood groves.

Let the Missouri reel you in, bend by bend, up to historic Fort Benton, where steamboats once landed and where the Grand Union Hotel serves prize-winning fare in restored historic ambiance. Just upstream, the city of Great Falls crowds the dramatic river gorge where Lewis and Clark spent a month making the eighteen-mile portage around the frothing cascades. The C. M. Russell Art Museum, the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, and miles of riverside pathways and parks highlight the history and drama focused around one of the great rivers of the West.

ROAMING NORTH TO SOUTH

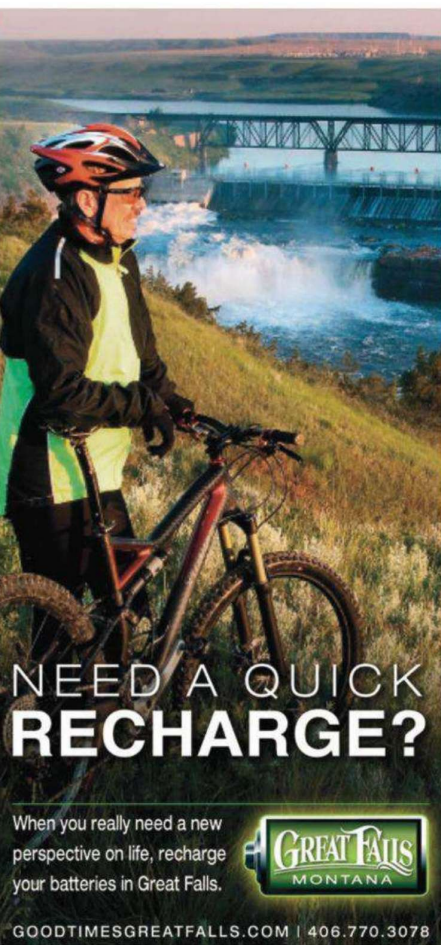
To begin, find the high country of Glacier National Park by joining the Going-to-the-Sun Road and climbing dramatically up to Logan Pass. It's prudent to stop in a pullout and soak up the view rather than risk running off the road – tiered peaks, swelling glaciers, cascading waterfalls. At the top, leave your car and walk along the Garden Wall hiking trail. Sheer mountain cliffs loom overhead, water cascades down steep valleys. In the distance, seemingly forever, more of the same – mountains, glaciers, river valleys. Spend a day, a week...

Eventually you'll arrive in Whitefish, in the northern tier of Flathead County, famous for its cherry orchards and freshwater sailing and summer festivals, a place where you might bump into Douglas Chadwick, a wildlife biologist, conservationist, and natural history writer. His work with national geographic has taken him all over the world for stories about whales, grizzlies, ants and elephants, but he is most content observing nature near home along the Crown of the Continent.

Here he has worked with Vital Ground, a land trust which he helped found to protect and restore North America's grizzly bear populations and other wildlife by conserving key habitats on private lands. Chadwick cites the "freedom to roam," an environmental movement advocating safe corridors as the best bet for wildlife survival into the next century, as his key philosophy.

In northern Montana towns are embraced by their surroundings. Whitefish's year-round panoramas from Big Mountain at Whitefish Mountain Resort. Rampant beauty of the Rocky Mountain Front rising out of the eastern plains. Near Choteau you'll find bird-watching at Freezeout Lake, full of migrating snow geese and sandhill cranes. And within those towns you'll find stories embraced by the people that live there.

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is Butte. Head south, on the way there, mine for nuggets of place like the Gates of the Mountains, along the Missouri River, which Lewis and Clark called "a most sublime and extraordinary spectacle." This was also the site of the infamous Mann Gulch fire, a tragedy chronicled in Norman Maclean's "young men and fire." Then there is the Archie Bray Foundation, a world-famous pottery collective in Helena.

Butte was once renowned for mineral wealth, but now history is the treasure trove as rich as silver and copper once were. At the heart of that past glory is Bob McMurray. A transplant to Montana, McMurray and his wife were tired of big city life in Denver. They stabbed a finger on a Montana highway map and landed in Butte. McMurray found work with construction crews remodeling old buildings.

He was astonished at all the history they uncovered.

"It was fascinating," he says. "I couldn't believe all the stuff we pulled up."

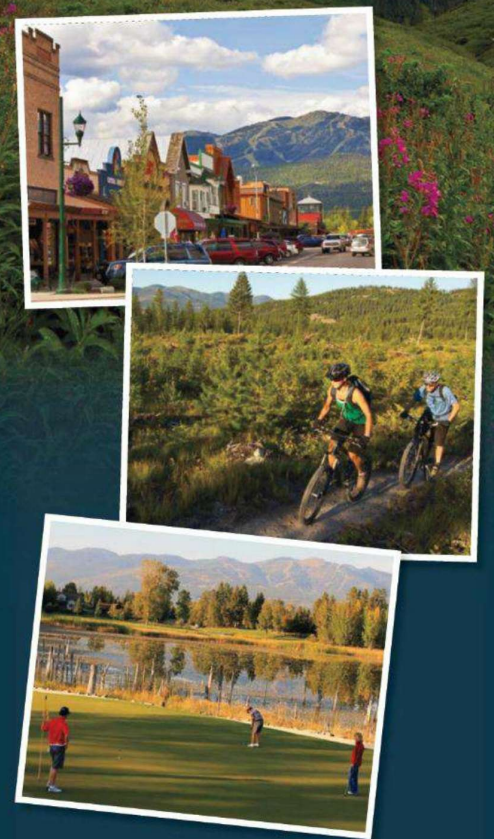
McMurray started paying attention, collecting things. He was amazed by the treasures from Butte's mining heyday. Eventually his fascination led him to begin guiding historic tours, including his Underground City tour, featuring a maze of below-street-level enterprises that once thrived when Butte was the biggest city west of the Mississippi. The tour takes in speakeasies, brothels, barber shops, and the dungeon-like jail that operated into the 1970s and counted Robert "Evel" Knievel as a guest, locked up for reckless driving.

Butte, Montana



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SIGHTSEEING SOUTHERN MONTANA

Aim high. Find your way to the top of the Beartooth Highway, at roughly 11,000', between Red Lodge and Cooke City, it's a road which mirrors the steep, daunting switchbacks of Glacier's Going-to-the-Sun Road. Stop there, get out, let it sink in. In this one vista, a 360-degree sweep, there is more to do than a single robust lifetime could possibly accomplish. Mountains to scramble up. Rivers to fish. Roads to drive. People to meet. Towns to visit. Slopes to ski. Trails to hike. One view, one life list, in a state, arguably, with more views than people.

Like the rest of Montana, it's way too big for any single vacation. Then again, it's pretty fun to try.

Your day might start at the Café Regis in Red Lodge, where locals hang out, ready to offer tips, and where award-winning breakfasts are home-cooked. Fortified, switchback up seasonal Highway 212, only open

from Memorial Day to Labor Day, and requiring Herculean snowplowing feats to manage that. Switchback down again, stopping at waterfalls, lakes, trailheads, on the way to Cooke City. Nose around town a bit. Someone might mention where the wolf packs are being sighted in Yellowstone National Park. You might grab a burger, then keep going.

Through the northeast gate of Yellowstone National Park... a few miles down, the Lamar Valley opens up. The Lamar isn't called the American Serengeti for nothing. Mile after mile of buffalo herds, antelope, elk, and more often than you'd think, glimpses of wolf and grizzly.

Around every corner, more options; like the short, steep hike to Trout Lake. In June the cutthroat trout will be spawning and otters will pop up like periscopes. Or the Buffalo Ranch, where, in the early years of the park, wranglers herded wild

bison like cattle, and where, now, the Yellowstone Association offers a year-round curriculum of natural history classes. Or a stroll up the trail from the 45th Parallel parking lot to soak in the Boiling River hot pots, right in the Gardiner River. The day might end at Chico Hot Springs, off of Highway 89 in Paradise Valley, with gourmet dinner and another chance to soak.

Another big day that only gets the highlight reel, cutting a narrow slice out of that 360° view from the top. Yet it feels epic and satisfying. Reassuring, too, because Montana offers hundreds of similar days, and people to meet along the way. Especially when you leave the interstate, drive the side roads, and climb out of the car whenever possible. It's there that you're most likely to catch the scents of stories.

Then, at some point, in the middle of it, you realize that it has become your story, too; woven into the spaces and currents under the big sky. ~



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DAISANN McLANE

Craving Flavors
of Home in
Faraway Lands

THE BACKSTREETS of Chengdu meander along canals lined with weeping willows. They narrow, unexpectedly, into potholed lanes where pork sellers try to outshout vendors pushing carts heaped with vegetables and sacks bursting with Sichuan's signature dried peppercorn, *huajiao*. ¶ In search of a break from city life in Hong Kong, I had grabbed the first cheap flight that looked interesting and now am in the capital of Sichuan Province. I get up early in the mornings and wander Chengdu until the soles of my feet ache. I invent new meal occasions—pre-brunch! après-lunch!—as excuses to stop for garlicky pork dumplings or

chunks of braised rabbit swimming in oil. I haggle with the old market lady selling the reddish pink *huajiao*. She crushes some of her highest-quality peppercorns in her palm and holds the powder under my nose so I can appreciate its sharp, tingly perfume. This is the pure pleasure of travel: To be as far from home as possible, with no purpose or goal other than to overload all of my senses with smells, sounds, and tastes that are utterly, completely, and wonderfully different from the things I am sure of.

And then, at the end of my perfect travel day, I hoof, exhausted, back to the neighborhood where I'm staying. But I don't go straight to my guesthouse. I've spotted something in the distance.

My feet are on autopilot now, walking me in the direction of an all too familiar black-and-green logo. Moments later, I'm curled up in an armchair, listening to Ella Fitzgerald sing and drinking from a cardboard cup filled with dark, blisteringly hot, and somewhat overroasted Guatemalan coffee. Through a labyrinth of streets, I've managed to land myself in probably the most familiar and homey place an American can find in the city of Chengdu: Starbucks.

To be fair, this Starbucks isn't your typical chain outlet found in cities from Boston to Bangkok: It's tucked into the main floor of a restored traditional Chengdu mansion. Still, part of me feels sheepish about skipping my total-immersion course in Sichuan street food to wrap myself in a cozy blanket of American sounds

and aromas. I'm always irritated when fellow travelers whinge about their difficulties getting decent hamburgers and fries in Tokyo or finding people who speak English in a remote Mexican village. Eat sushi, learn Spanish! I grumble to myself (and sometimes to them). Did you come all this way just to experience the world through the filter of what you already know?

Yet, sipping my caffeine fix in this home away from home, I remember a long-ago afternoon in another foreign place, Budapest. I had felt rather lost and out of sorts in Hungary's capital until I discovered a leafy boulevard that, inexplicably, put me at ease. It took me a while to realize why: The grand, fin-de-siècle apartment buildings reminded me of the first apartment building, on Manhattan's Upper West Side, that I had moved into after graduating from college. Without even entering them, I could see the high ceilings, the ornate crown moldings, the parquet floors, and imagine the artists, musicians, and professionals who inhabited this bourgeois neighborhood. At last, in a strange city, surrounded by people who were speaking one of the world's more challenging languages, I had a point of reference from home—my own small entryway to Budapest's layered history and culture.

Traveling outside what you know is thrilling but exhausting, and can throw you off center. Sometimes you need a touchstone to help you deal with all of the new input. "Won tons are like the Italian ravioli you make, without the sauce," I tell my 84-year-old mother, hoping to ease her into her first-ever Chinese food experience, in Hong Kong. Start with what you know and work forward. Home might seem like the polar opposite of travel, but I've come to think of travel and home as complementary, intertwined even. Home is essential to travel because it gives us tools to decode the place we're in and a benchmark that lets us see how far we've come. The things most familiar to us are what make our most ambitious travel possible.

I'm not suggesting we should travel everywhere surrounded by a protective bubble of our home culture. But looking for a bit of the familiar in faraway places isn't necessarily a bad thing. After days of speaking pidgin English, a fast-talking evening with North Americans can hit the spot. Similarly, weeks of traveling in Southeast Asia and eating spicy soup for breakfast sometimes make me yearn for the westernized banana pancakes they serve in backpacker guesthouses. It's not being an unenthusiastic traveler to recognize that familiar touchstones give us a needed breather on the road, the better to help us dive back, with gusto, into cultures not our own.

The Sichuan *huajiao* pepper has a heady, intoxicating fragrance, but it is also overpowering—it numbs your taste buds and keeps you from tasting anything else. To really appreciate it, you need other flavors and spices for balance and contrast. Even Sichuan people wouldn't eat a meal with the pepper in every dish. I've eaten a lot of *huajiao* today, and it's delicious. But I know it will taste even better to me after I've finished my Caffè Americano. ■



Fresh-brewed: a taste of American coffee in China.

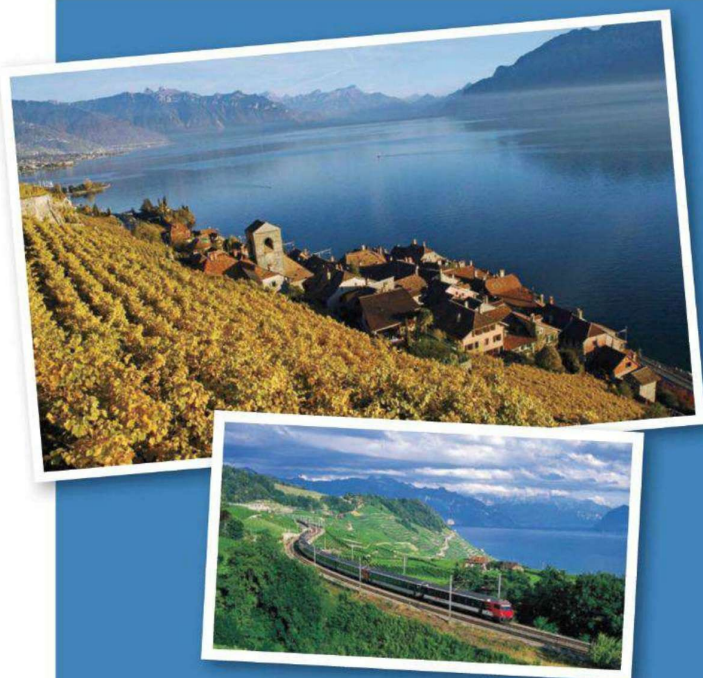
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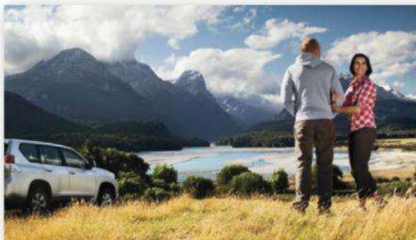
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Honoring excellence in travel marketing, the Leader in Sustainable Tourism Awards were presented at HSMAI's annual Adrian Awards in New York City at the Marriott Marquis on February 27, 2012.



Left to right: Fran Brasseux, Exec.V.P., HSMAI; Marja Schans, Manager, Parador Resort & Spa; Diego Francisco Gonzalez, Manager, Parador Resort & Spa; Kimberly Connaghan, V.P., Publisher, National Geographic Traveler

Platinum Winner

Parador Resort & Spa

For this resort and spa in Costa Rica, being sustainable is not a prerogative, but an obligation. Through its "We Share" program and commitment to sustainable tourism, community outreach, and education, Parador Resort & Spa inspires travelers to protect, recycle, respect, and honor precious resources in their own backyard and beyond.

Gold Winners

Destination Hotels & Resorts

This leading hotel management company created a new benchmark for its hotels and resorts through a series of environmental initiatives both on the corporate and individual property levels. Their hugely successful "Destination Earth" program resulted in more than 100 environmental initiatives company wide which seeks to protect each of their unique and diverse destinations.

Holland America Line

A cruise industry leader, Holland America Line made great strides in achieving its goal of offering only responsibly sourced seafood. In doing so, it helped to ensure the continued availability of fish species that are essential to a biologically diverse marine environment.

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For a business that operates in some of the most beautiful places on Earth, this company's environmental achievements are its proudest accomplishments. Finding cleaner ways of operating meant facilitating change in every area, from sourcing, packaging, and transportation to energy use, waste generation, and even their employees' lifestyles.



Photos: (Top) Maureen Callahan, V.P. of Marketing, André Fournier, Sr. V.P. of Sales and Marketing, Destination Hotels & Resorts; (Bottom) Andrew Heltzel, Director of Marketing, Xanterra Parks & Resorts

BOYD MATSON

On the Horns of a Dilemma in South Africa

BRETT DU BOIS isn't the first guide in Africa to tell me, "The rhinoceros has terrible eyesight," but he is the first to try to prove it by using me as a human eye chart. The plan—and by plan I mean a spur-of-the-moment, wild impulse you would never consider if given a night to sleep on it—is to hop out of our vehicle and stand behind a small clump of fallen acacias in the path of two white rhinos headed for a watering hole. ¶ In fairness to Brett, he will be standing beside me. But I immediately sense a flaw. If we're the rhinos' eye chart, Brett is the small print, eighth line—in other words, the rhinos would need the equivalent of 20/20 vision.

At six feet five, I'm the big *E*. I'm thinking they would have to be blind not to see me.

Being spotted could give new meaning to the expression "on the horns of a dilemma." The dilemma being up to 6,000 pounds of rhinoceros charging toward us—led by those huge dagger-shaped horns—at 25 to 30 miles an hour or, more significantly, at least three or four times as fast as I can run. Yet in spite of all their brute force, these prehistoric-looking creatures are now endangered. During the past four years, the threat to their survival has dramatically increased. In 2007 only 13 rhinos were illegally poached in South Africa. In 2010 the number was 333. Last year at least 448 rhinos were slaughtered, including 19 of the critically endangered black rhinos.

Rhino killers aren't interested in the meat; they just want the horns, which are ground up for use in traditional Asian medicines to treat everything from fevers to gout to cancer. No medical evidence proves the effectiveness of the material (which mostly consists of keratin, the same stuff found in human hair and fingernails), but economic growth in China and Vietnam has created a surplus of cash for luxury items, inflating the price for illegal rhino horn and bringing new recruits to the poaching business. By some estimates, the street price for rhino horn now hovers near \$50,000 a pound, which is more than the price of gold and, in many cases, cocaine.

(Still not impressed? On average, a white rhino's horns weigh 12 pounds.) Last fall, the Javan rhino was declared extinct in Vietnam. Considering some 21,000 of Africa's estimated 25,000 rhinos roam South Africa, it's no wonder the poachers have come flocking.

To better understand the crisis, I too have come to South Africa, to the famous Kruger National Park, where the majority of the poaching is taking place—the safari destination lost 252 rhinos in 2011 alone. I'm staying at nearby Sabi Sabi, a private game reserve that, so far, has successfully protected its rhinos. Sabi Sabi occasionally offers walking safaris through the bush for the adventurous few who the guides determine aren't likely to freak out and run screaming at the first sight of a rhino or elephant, a reaction that could trigger a new reality show: *Slow Tourists, Fast Animals*.

But the guides won't invite their guests to do what Brett and I are about to do—to see how close we can get to wild rhinos without their noticing, even when they're looking right at us, an experiment to see just how easy it would be for a poacher to sneak up on a rhino. The wind is in our favor, blowing away from the rhinos and toward us, so they shouldn't pick up our scent. Brett whispers, "Don't make any noise, and don't move." The rhinos slowly make their way past the trees providing our minimal camouflage when

they come to a complete stop, turn, and look straight in our direction. All that's between the pointed ends of two horns and us is maybe 30 feet of very thin air and what I hope is some very, very bad eyesight. For nearly a full minute they stare, a tense assessment as to exactly what species Brett and I might be.

Finally they start calmly walking in our direction to get to the water behind us. Brett again whispers, "Don't move! Don't move!" That's when I realize I'm not even breathing, and I'd better at least move my lungs before I pass out. The first rhino passes ten feet to our right, but the second, larger one picks up our scent. At five or six feet away he stops, suddenly recognizing the big *E*

on the eye chart. Fortunately his next reaction is to jump to his left, away from me, and trot toward his buddy and the water. I ask Brett, "Is it OK now to move? Because my legs would really like to shake."

Though I'm armed only with a camera for my close encounter, the experience makes it clear that evolution has not provided the rhinoceros with an adequate defense against men armed with guns and dreams of big money. To save the rhinos, poaching must carry a higher price tag, and huge fines and mandatory jail sentences must be applied all the way up the line, from low-level hunters to importers. Even then, these massive creatures built like tanks will still need bodyguards. At the parks that are most successfully protecting their populations, rangers follow rhinos with automatic rifles and a shoot-to-kill policy. That's a price that should give most poachers second thoughts. Such a solution may sound drastic. But if something isn't done soon, man will do in, say, the next 60 years what the planet couldn't do in the previous 60 million: push Africa's last remaining rhinoceroses into extinction. ■



The horns are the rhino's great asset—and peril.

Editor at large **BOYD MATSON** hosts National Geographic Weekend on the radio.



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CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT

My Pet Peeve Isn't About Snakes on a Plane

IT MIGHT BE SOMETHING of a half-truth to say that travel has gone to the dogs. In fact, it's also gone to the cats, the hamsters, and the occasional snake. ¶ Pets rule our world. Six out of ten American households have a pet. We take our animal companions—that's what the more enlightened among us call them—everywhere: to the mall, to church, and yes, on trips great and small. ¶ America's pets are perhaps the planet's most peripatetic. More than half of all pet owners (60 percent) brought a dog or cat on a trip in 2010, according to the most recent figures, and the percentage is climbing. "People have an expectation that they should be able to take their pets wherever they go,"

says Rachel Farris, director of operations for PetRelocation.com, an Austin, Texas, pet-moving company.

There are pet-friendly hotels. ("Pets are considered a part of the family," Marriott says on its website, promising, "you can rest assured that your furry friends will enjoy a relaxing, comfortable stay.") Pets are welcome in many restaurants, though usually outside. At Cones and Bones, in Lansing, Michigan, dogs can come in for a nondairy treat while their owners choose their ice cream flavors. There's even an airline for animals, Pet Airways, that will carry your beloved pet to a handful of destinations, including Los Angeles, Phoenix, Denver, and New York. Its motto: "Your pet is not luggage."

But some have questioned the assumption that man's best friend should travel—and specifically fly in the same cramped cabin as fare-paying humans. And that's led to a new kind of conflict. On one side are pet owners who insist they have a right to take their four-legged friends anywhere; on the other are passengers inconvenienced, and at times even injured, by the little fur balls. (We're not talking here about the many animals that fly in the hold, at risk of being turned into a hot dog in summer and a Popsicle in winter. I'll save that one for another column.)

When it comes to pets versus people, who's the alpha dog? I frequently get dispatches from the front lines of this territorial dispute. Shannon Clair, a marketing assistant from Lenexa, Kansas, who

says she loves animals, describes her allergies as "exquisite"—even the slightest hint of dander makes her eyes swell shut. But she says that some traveling pet owners are far from understanding when she requests they keep their animals away. "People sure get irritated with me for being allergic to their precious pets."

Straddling the fence—and not necessarily wanting to take sides—are the airlines, which have nevertheless made their planes more attractive to pets and their human companions (flying pets mean extra money for the airlines, after all). For example, JetBlue and Continental offer special programs, which include free online guides, tips on "petiquette," and even frequent flier miles for your animal companion. Even no-nonsense Southwest, in a surprise move in 2009, opened its cabins to dogs and cats. Most domestic airlines allow cats and small dogs in the cabin if kept in a carrier that fits under the seat. Some limit the age or number of pets.

Disclosure: I live with three Bengal cats named Clio, Lia, and Pollux. They're talkers, as we who are owned by cats would say. And while they have nothing against animals traveling, they themselves would prefer to stay home with Rondoe, the cat sitter. As for whether human travelers deserve to have an allergy-free, noise-free, and bite-free trip, they don't much care. Then again, what do I know? I talk to cats.



Some fliers have a bone to pick with the airlines.

I'm not saying Fido or Fluffy ought to be banned from traveling, just that it's time to think of pet travel in a more humane way. There are legitimate reasons to take animals on a trip, to be sure. Service animals do vitally important work. The travel industry is correct (and actually required by law) to allow passengers with disabilities to bring these animals. If you're relocating, you need to be able to take your pet along, and airlines, hotels, and car rental companies should make reasonable accommodations. And if you and Rover decide to hop in an RV and see the country, I'm not going to stop you.

But where there's a conflict between pets and people, I'm siding with the humans (sorry, kitties). The long-haired Norwegian forest cat in seat 12A doesn't have more rights than the road warrior with asthma, coughing his lungs out in 17D. I'm entitled to fly without getting an earful from your yipping Maltese, who is "usually so quiet."

Airlines have a role to play as peacemakers or, if necessary, enforcers. Airlines need more people-centered policies. Currently, if a pet is qualified to be on a flight, there aren't many other rules governing the behavior of the animal and its owner. Procedures are usually at the flight crew's discretion. If an animal is disruptive or causes discomfort to a human passenger, I've heard it can go either way—sometimes the animal and owner get kicked off; other times the aggrieved passenger leaves. That needs to change.

How many of us take the welfare of those around us into consideration when we make the decision to bring our pet on a trip? Vacations are uniquely human, and maybe they should stay that way. If my cats really could talk, that's what they'd tell you. ■

Editor at large CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT addresses readers' travel problems. E-mail your story to celliott@ngs.org.

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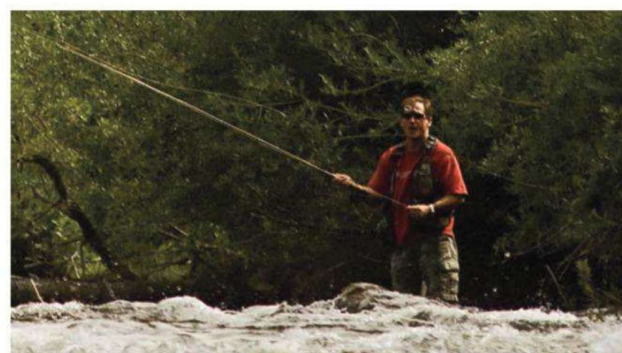
Traveler Kasia Wysota and her rickshaw driver share a laugh in the Bèn Thành market of Hồ Chí Minh City, Vietnam.

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COSTAS CHRIST

Out of the Chaos: the Promise of a New Grecian Formula

AM ON THE BALCONY of the Grande Bretagne, one of Athens's most famous hotels, a tribute to old European grandeur in the shadow of the Acropolis, where democracy was born more than 2,000 years ago. From my perch above Constitution Square, I can see today's democracy in action—demonstrators chant slogans and wave fists against the government they hold responsible for leading them into a fiscal firestorm. But Greeks also know what the panic-prone, 24-hour news cycle has overlooked: This ancient land has weathered worse storms, from Persian and Roman armies to Ottoman occupation and military junta. As my father often said to me, "We Greeks thrive on chaos."

So while Greeks remain deeply shaken about the current crisis, they have a more sanguine long-term outlook. Which is why I am on my way to Thessaloniki, Greece's second largest city. Word has reached me of a cultural renaissance.

During the past few decades, Greece barreled down the road of mass, and most definitely crass, tourism. More than 16 million international tourists visited the country in 2011, over a million more than in the previous year. That should be great news for a country that relies on tourism for economic growth. Yet the economic benefits from those holidaymakers are spiraling down, by some estimates dropping 10 to 15 percent last year. Today, a tourist in Greece spends an average of about \$100 a day—including lodging, meals, and activities. This so-called vacation bargain carries a big price tag in terms of damage to the culture and the environment. Busloads clog fragile archaeological sites; packed-to-the-gills charter flights dump partying loads onto tiny islands; and overflowing cruise crowds spill into historic ports. The result: Once idyllic fishing hamlets and villages have been transformed into emporiums of cheap trinket shops and look-alike concrete hotels.

Don't get me wrong. I am not foolish enough to think that a place should never change. But when that change is for the worse ("nothing is real here anymore," one native of tourist-laden Santorini lamented), it's time to reboot the system, lest tourism to this

sun-drenched land conquer the country in a way that even centuries of invading empires failed to do. Enter Thessaloniki.

"There is nothing wrong with being a country of feta and olives!" insists Yiannis Boutaris, the gold-earringed, tattooed mayor. "These agricultural products are our heritage, not our problem. We want to be who we are. That's why Starbucks and McDonald's have had little success in this city. I want Thessaloniki to be a model for sustainable tourism in Greece," Boutaris tells me in his office near the city's waterfront, where bicycle lanes follow the edge of the Aegean. He is reacting to what an Athens official told me about the economic crisis: There is a fear that Greece will slide back into being a country of feta and olives. To Boutaris, that would be an improvement.

The 70-year-old former winemaker is promoting tourism that supports authenticity rather than trampling it. Jazz clubs blending Eastern and Western music are springing up in abandoned buildings. Chefs are forging more partnerships with local farmers and cooking up what many Greeks now agree is the best cuisine in the country (I concur, having had one of the finest meals I have ever eaten at the Epta Thalasses restaurant). And a potpourri of vibrant street cafés, outdoor markets, and art galleries tucked amid the city's ancient ruins and modern architecture is bringing out the best of both. The creative energy is palpable.

Thessaloniki is the epicenter of this movement, but from Athens to Crete, a new course is being charted for one of the Mediterranean's most popular travel destinations. "Greece was bent on gaining mass tourism and losing its soul. Now Greeks are heading back to their roots and talking about a sustainable future that embraces nature and culture," says Nikki Rose, founder of Crete's Culinary Sanctuaries, a company that organizes tours in partnership with village artisans.

In Athens, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation is breaking ground this spring on a "cultural Noah's ark"—a center (partially powered by solar en-

ergy) that will house the National Library and the Greek National Opera. In Thira on the island of Santorini, there is a visionary mayor, Anastasios Nikolaos Zorzos. "We want to change tourism for the better, rather than have tourism keep changing us," he tells me.

The Association of Greek Tourism Enterprises (SETE) has issued a report on the future of tourism in Greece, stating it is time to "rethink our mistakes and seek a new approach." Still, many Greeks fear hitting a brick wall when it comes to the national government, which has largely promoted dependency on low-budget, high-volume tourism. "The people are convinced, and now we hope the government will understand, that the tourism model we have followed for the last 30 years is no longer relevant to our future," says Georgios Drakopoulos, SETE's director general.

Is the country that gave democracy to the world, along with epic poems, great advances in science—and, yes, the word "chaos"—about to embark on a new golden age of Greek tourism? If only the oracle at Delphi were still around to tell us. ■



Crowds watch as the sun sets on Santorini.

Editor at large **COSTAS CHRIST** writes about the changing world of travel. E-mail him through Travel_Talk@ngs.org.

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Short Stops in Boston

WHAT'S NEW IN THIS CLASSIC AMERICAN CITY

By JANELLE NANOS

AT NEARLY FOUR centuries old, Boston hits home runs in the history department. But don't let that fool you into thinking that a visit will be nothing more than a grade school textbook recap. In the past few years, some of the most storied institutions in the Hub (as the city is often nicknamed) have been busy reinventing themselves. City historian Thomas O'Connor says he's always loved how he can stand in one place along the **Freedom Trail** and feel surrounded by the

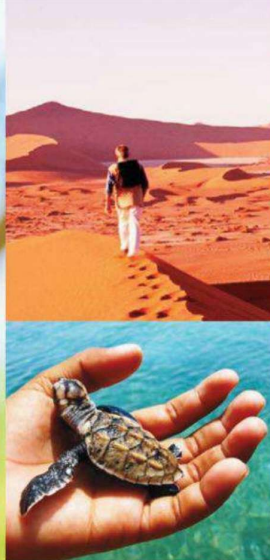
past. But now, he says, "Boston is spreading out." New waterfront developments and an expansion of public space are allowing visitors to explore more of the city.

WHAT TO DO The nation's oldest major league ballpark turns 100 this year, and the Red Sox are throwing a yearlong birthday party. Fanatics can pore over some 4,000 artifacts, from ticket stubs to bases, that will be displayed throughout **Fenway Park**, and a series of games will take place with players sporting period uniforms.

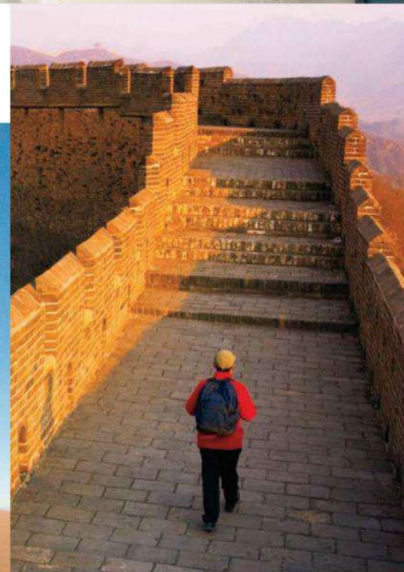
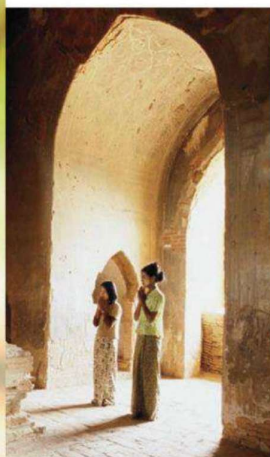
The Big Dig, the city's notoriously delayed construction project, is finally complete, and in its wake Boston is far greener and more navigable than before. Stroll along the **Rose Kennedy Greenway**, a mile-and-a-half-long ribbon of a park connecting the North End with downtown's historic sites and Faneuil Hall that is dotted with fountains, gardens, and lawns perfect for lounging. The new **Hubway** bike-share system offers one- or three-day rentals to explore the city's 50 miles of bike paths. Download the Spotcycle app to locate nearby bikes.

A vendor hawks some of the million-plus hot dogs served each year at Fenway Park.





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The Rose Kennedy Greenway makes a splash with fountains and lawns for lounging. Nearby, Trade serves flatbreads (opposite) like this one with ricotta and rosemary.

Some \$760 million has been spent overhauling Boston museums in the past decade. The **Museum of Fine Arts** unveiled not only a major renovation but also a spectacular addition in the past two years, with a total of 60 new galleries that celebrate American and contemporary art. And this January marked the opening of the new Renzo Piano-designed wing of the **Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum**. The airy glass structure, which houses classrooms and a three-story jewel box of a concert hall, provides a dramatic counterpoint to the original Venetian-style palace filled with Gardner's eclectic, globe-spanning collection of Whistlers, Rembrandts, and religious icons. "Gardner loved working with artists, musicians, and scholars," says Anne Hawley, the museum's director. "This allows us to continue that legacy."

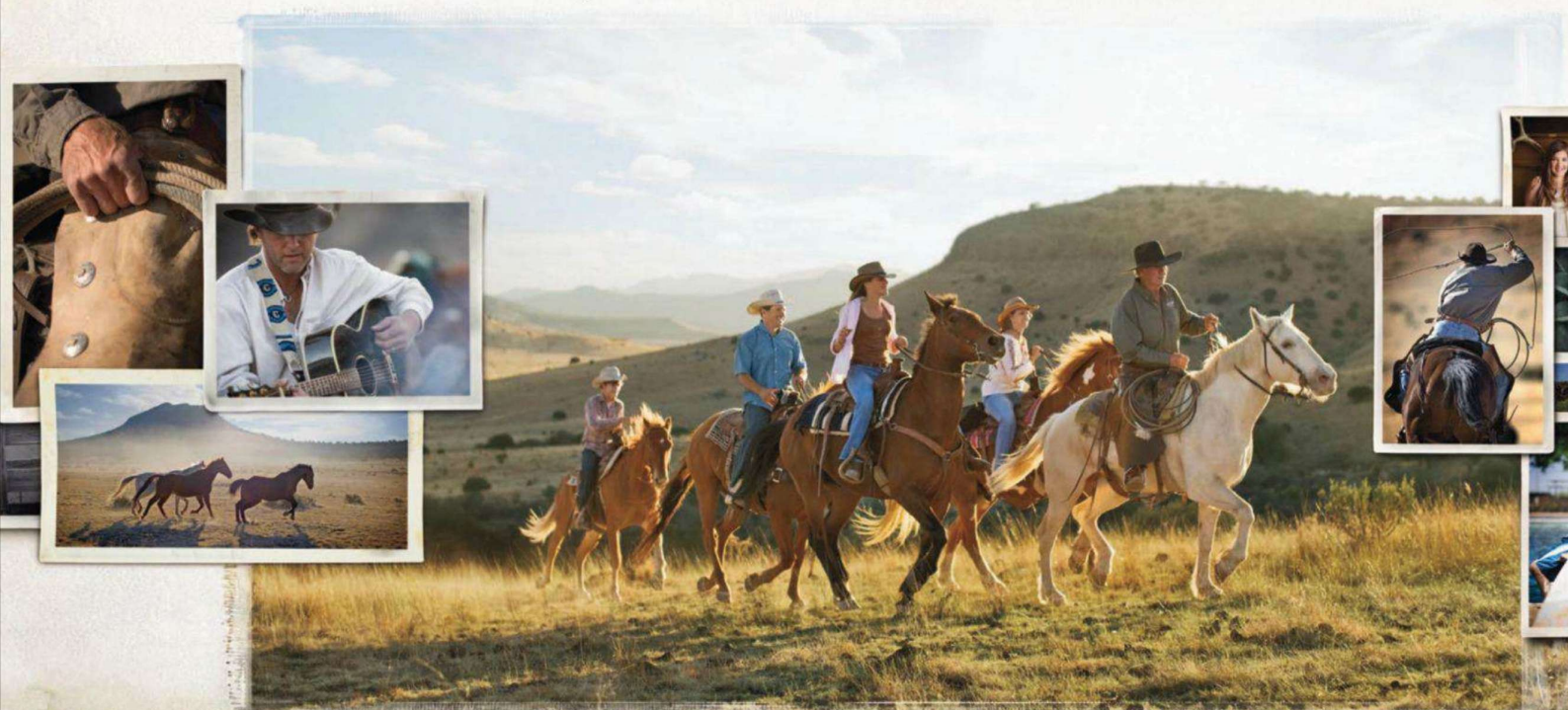
Though the concept has been co-opted by contemporary politics, the original Tea Party will be revisited this June with the opening of the **Boston Tea Party Ships and Museum**. Built on a pier in Fort Point Channel, near the site of the historic altercation, the museum features a reimagining of the taverns where the Sons of Liberty strategized and will be flanked by replicas of two colonial vessels. Visitors can express their own taxation frustration by hurling (retrievable) tea crates off their sides.

DAVID PARSONS (FOUNTAIN)

*Sat. 8:12 a.m.
Made it over the ridge.*

*Sat. 3:43 p.m.
Headed down the trail.*

*Sat. 8:28 p.m.
Rode under the open sky.*



WHERE TO SHOP Though steeped in history, Fort Point is the go-to answer to anyone who claims that Boston is as edgy as a butter knife. Its rows of industrial warehouses, which once stored wool, sugar, and molasses, now host tech start-ups, nonprofits, and studio space.

The **Made in Fort Point** store has prints and paintings from area artists on offer, as well as nestlike sconces and pendant lamps from local design studio Birch and Willow.

Wander along the HarborWalk to visit the new home of **Louis**, the revered 87-year-old clothier, which shrugged off its stodgy Back Bay quarters in 2010 for a sleek space overlooking the harbor. Louis has big-name labels like Marni, Jason Wu, and Proenza Schouler, but it's also one of the few places you'll find the nubby knits and asymmetrical dresses of local designer Jackie Fraser-Swan, whose line, Emerson, is both her middle name and a tribute to her distant relative, Ralph Waldo.

Plan to stop at the nearby **Institute of Contemporary Art's** gift shop for more idiomatic souvenirs, such as cuff links crafted from the original parquet floors of the former Boston Garden arena or from Bruins hockey pucks.

Newbury Street, Boston's major retail thoroughfare, boasts the stores—and crowds—of Madison Avenue or Rodeo

Drive. For an antidote to that, head instead to the South End, where you'll find *GQ*-worthy duds at menswear shops **Sault**, **Uniform**, and **Bobby From Boston**, and flirty dresses and denim at women's boutiques such as **Flock**.

On Sundays, locals weave through the booths at the nearby **SoWa Open Market** for its triumvirate of art, antiques, and artisanal foodstuffs on sale. It's also the place to come for everything from adorable stuffed narwhals to old subway token earrings to tangy Grillo's Pickles.

WHERE TO EAT Take the opportunity to graze when Boston's flourishing community of food trucks converges on weekends—on Sundays they're found at the SoWa market, where you can sample Green Muenster Melts from **Roxy's Grilled Cheese**, chickpea fritters from **Clover**, or mini lobster sliders from the **Go Fish!** truck.

For a more upscale meal, head across the Charles River to Cambridge, which is home not only to Harvard and MIT but also to some of the smartest, most inventive food

in the area. (The *Boston Globe* made waves last year when it said the best food in Boston... was in Cambridge.) Chef Tony Maws won a James Beard Award in 2011 for his creative nose-to-tail offerings at **Craigie on Main**—all the more reason to cast decisions aside and let him choose the six or eight courses for your tasting menu, which may offer dishes such as beet and pig's ear salad, and celery and green apple sorbet.

Other Cambridge standouts include **East by Northeast's** modern Chinese menu, with its hand-rolled noodles with pork ragout and duck confit dumplings. **Area Four's** wood-fired pizzas are topped with surprising combinations such as pancetta, potato, and mascarpone. "I covet their oven," says Joanne Chang,

the owner of the always packed **Flour Bakery**, whose roasted lamb sandwiches and homemade toaster pastries fuel Cambridge's agile minds.

Chang adds: "Go to **Toscanini's** for the best ice cream in the world." Try its more unusual flavors such as burnt caramel or goat cheese brownie. ■



MIKE DISKIN (FLATBREAD)

Sat. 9:07 p.m.
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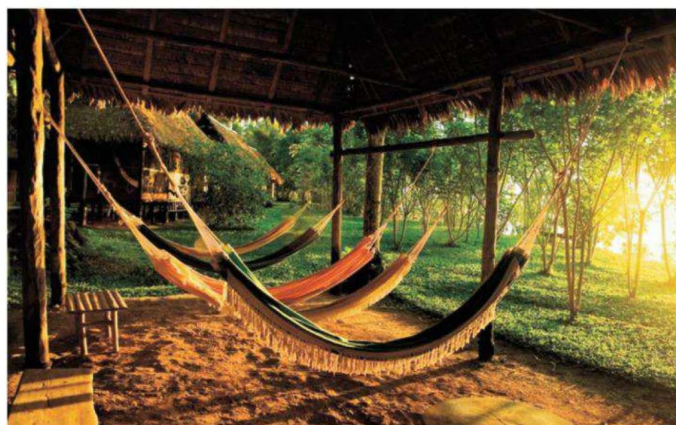
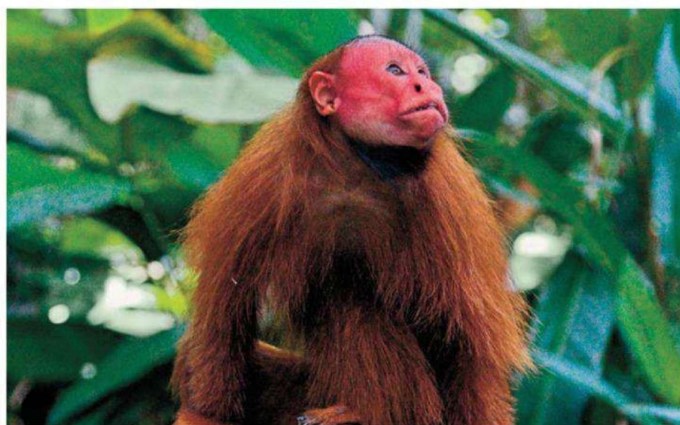
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The Jungle Rooms

PERUVIAN LODGES PUT YOU IN THE HEART OF THE AMAZON

By ROBERT EARLE HOWELLS



At Inkaterra, sleep in a tree house, identify rare birds, and relax in a hammock. Spot bald uakaris at the Amazon Refuge Center.

ONE BEAUTY of the Amazon rain forest of western Peru is that it's always at its peak, lush and green, teeming with wildlife, and among the world's sensory pleasures. It has only two seasons, high water and low water—rainy and less rainy—and their relevance pertains mainly to how one gets around. During high water, December into May, much exploring is by boat or canoe. When the floodwaters subside in June, options for terra firma exploration increase and it's possible to hike on jungle trails. Base-camp lodges cater to visitors eager to see wildlife. Guides point out colorful macaws, acrobatic monkeys, hungry caimans, and pink river dolphins slicing through black rivers. You'll go on boat tours, meet locals (perhaps a shaman),

and fish for piranhas. Most lodges offer five-day packages, making a jungle visit an easy add-on after touring Machu Picchu. But if you can, allow more time in the jungle to take in the gradual unfolding of the rain forest's abundance and enjoy some hammock time. Don't expect four-star hotel luxury, but these lodges all offer screened-in (bug-free) comfort, showers, the option of an en-suite bathroom, and all-inclusive programs that cover food and daily guides.

MONKEY BUSINESS The 1.1-million-acre conservation area surrounding **Tahuayo Lodge** (and a smaller sister lodge upriver called the Research Center) on the Tahuayo River in northern Peru is said to contain more primate species than any other region of the Amazon. That means you may

glimpse the rare red-faced uakari monkey and will likely see squirrel monkeys, pygmy marmosets, and tamarins. The solar-powered lodge boasts a three-platform zip line for hanging out high in the canopy where the best bird action happens. The local bird list is 600 strong, including the hoatzin, a pheasant-size prehistoric hold-over. Most guided excursions run a half day, so you're always in the comfort of the lodge for meals unless you opt for a jungle-survival campout—in which case, how do you like your grubs, raw or grilled? From \$1,295 for an eight-day package including boat transportation from Iquitos.

CREATURE COMFORTS Situated on the banks of the Amazon River, **Ceiba Tops Lodge** serves up hotel amenities such as

Wi-Fi, air-conditioning, a swimming pool, and four-walled guest rooms with private bath. One full-day excursion leads to a canopy walkway 115 feet high and some 1,500 feet long, with a stunning view of the treetop world. Look for pink river dolphins during the boat trip that gets you there. Another outing takes in Monkey Island, where five species of monkeys live on a private reserve. From \$765 for a five-day package including boat transportation from Iquitos.

OFF THE GRID Located on the Yanayacu River, the **Amazon Refuge Wildlife Conservation Center** tends to draw hard-core birders, scientists, and serious jungle lovers who appreciate its remote location. The refuge's 100-acre parcel was granted by the local Indians, who help staff the lodge and manage the reserve (the same reserve that encompasses Tahuayo Lodge). Guests stay in private, solar-powered bungalows built from naturally felled trees with roofs thatched from local palms. Here, check rarities like the wattled curassow and Zimmer's woodcreeper off your birding list, paddle upriver to a congregation of parrots, visit a local Indian community, and fish for pirarucu—one of the world's largest freshwater species. From \$1,045 for a five-day package including boat transportation from Iquitos.

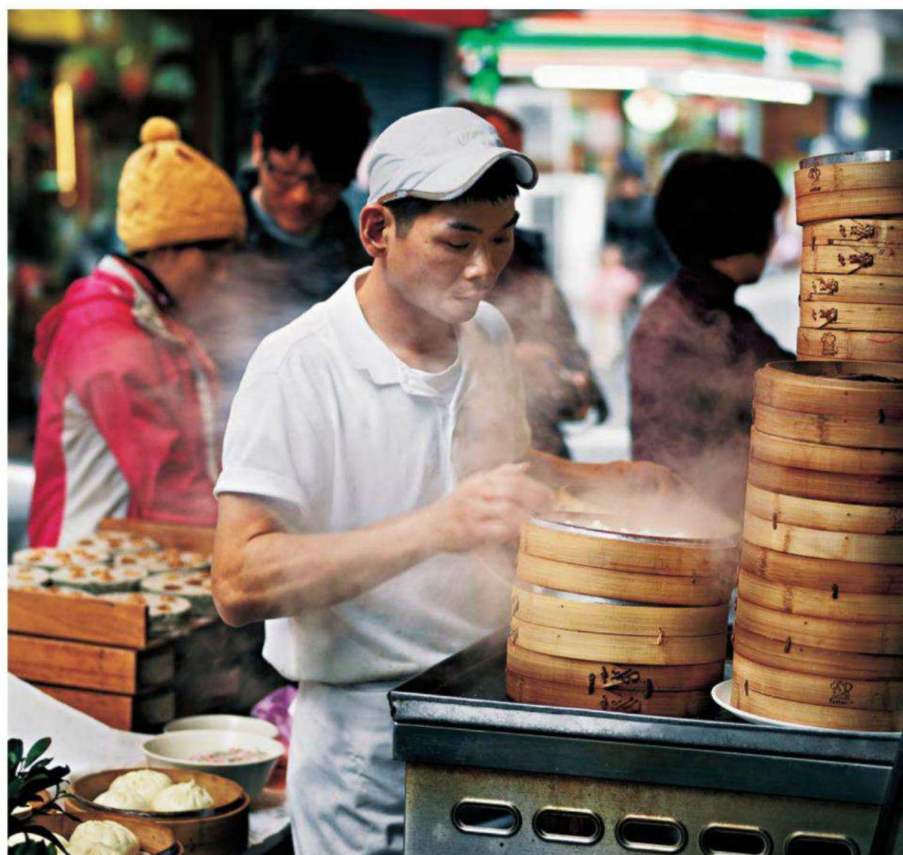
TREETOP HIGH Southern Peru's **Inkaterra Reserva Amazónica** is run by one of the country's top luxury hotel groups, which explains comforts including a spa, screened siesta lounges with hammocks, robes, and organic toiletries. The lodge features its own canopy walkway, not to mention the Canopy Tree House, a guest room perched some 90 feet above the jungle floor. Excursions into the adjacent Tambopata National Reserve may turn up caimans and hoatzin birds, while a canoe paddle on Lake Sandoval might yield a sighting of the rare giant river otter. From \$843 per person for a five-day package including boat transportation to and from Puerto Maldonado.

FOR THE BIRDERS You don't have to be a birder to appreciate the fact that over 575 species have been identified at **Manu Wildlife Center**, on the Madre de Dios River at the edge of the Manu Biosphere Reserve in southern Peru. The jungle is wild and healthy here. Capuchin, spider, and emperor tamarin monkeys accompany even a casual stroll outside your bungalow. Nearby, a blind offers the chance to spy rhino-like tapirs, while a clay lick hosts macaws and parrots daily. The recommended approach to Manu entails a spectacular 1.5-day crossing of the Andes from Cusco by minibus, with a stay in a cloud forest lodge en route. From \$1,644 for a six-day package including the bus trip. ■

Hello, Dumpling

THREE EATERIES FOR A TRUE TASTE OF TAIPEI

AUSPICIOUS SYMBOLS OF wealth and good fortune, dumplings have long graced Chinese New Year banquet tables. Today, tender *jiao zhi* sate appetites any time of day in Taiwan's capital, Taipei, where dumpling restaurants are ubiquitous. Whether it's the boiled pork dumpling, fried pot sticker, or steamed soup dumpling, these dough-wrapped nuggets (about 50 cents for one) will soothe grumbling tummies and maybe even bring a traveler luck. Once a single store with two rows of tables, **DinTaiFung** has become Taiwan's most acclaimed soup dumpling establishment with 64 international outposts. Watch the chefs at work at the Zhongxiao branch, near downtown's popular "Tea Alley." Splurge on the black truffle specialty, delicate thin-skinned dumplings in a rich broth (\$30 for an order of ten). Eat like a local at **Zhen Hsiang Guo Tie**, where you might share a crowded table with other patrons during peak lunch hours. Here, the classic pork-and-cabbage dumplings are sweet and nongreasy, and the vegetable-filled pot stickers have a satisfyingly crunchy crust. Perched on the north end of Yong Kang Jie, a path of street food near Shi Da University, **Kao Chi** draws out the weekend crowd with its sizzling *sheng jian bao*: pleated dumplings packed with pork and pan-fried to golden crispy perfection. Another specialty: the crab soup dumplings stuffed with briny orange roe. —CHRISTINE WEI



Sample a variety of dumplings at vendors' stalls near Taipei's Shi Da University.



Boys amuse themselves in car-free Campo de' Fiori, a lively, trattoria-lined piazza where potable water flows from a tap.

When in Rome ...

EXPLORE ANCIENT CATACOMBS, PLAY GLADIATOR, AND CLIMB HILLS

By SUSAN SPANO

IMPERIAL SPLENDOR, religion, and Renaissance art give Rome deep and enduring meaning to adults. The very same things can speak to children (*bambini* in Italian) who find hidden treasures throughout the city.

GOING DOWN IN TIME Escape underground in Rome where it's satisfyingly spooky with a cool climate year-round. Out the cypress-lined **Appia Antica**—blissfully closed to cars on Sundays—the tombs, tunnels, and secret Christian symbols of the catacombs tell how early believers sacrificed for their faith. The Scavi Tour at **St. Peter's Basilica** is an unforgettable adventure for teenagers (15 years and up), descending deep below the basilica to explore the burial place of St. Peter, and kids of all ages can climb 551 steps (or take the elevator) to Michelangelo's dome. There are mummies in the Egyptian

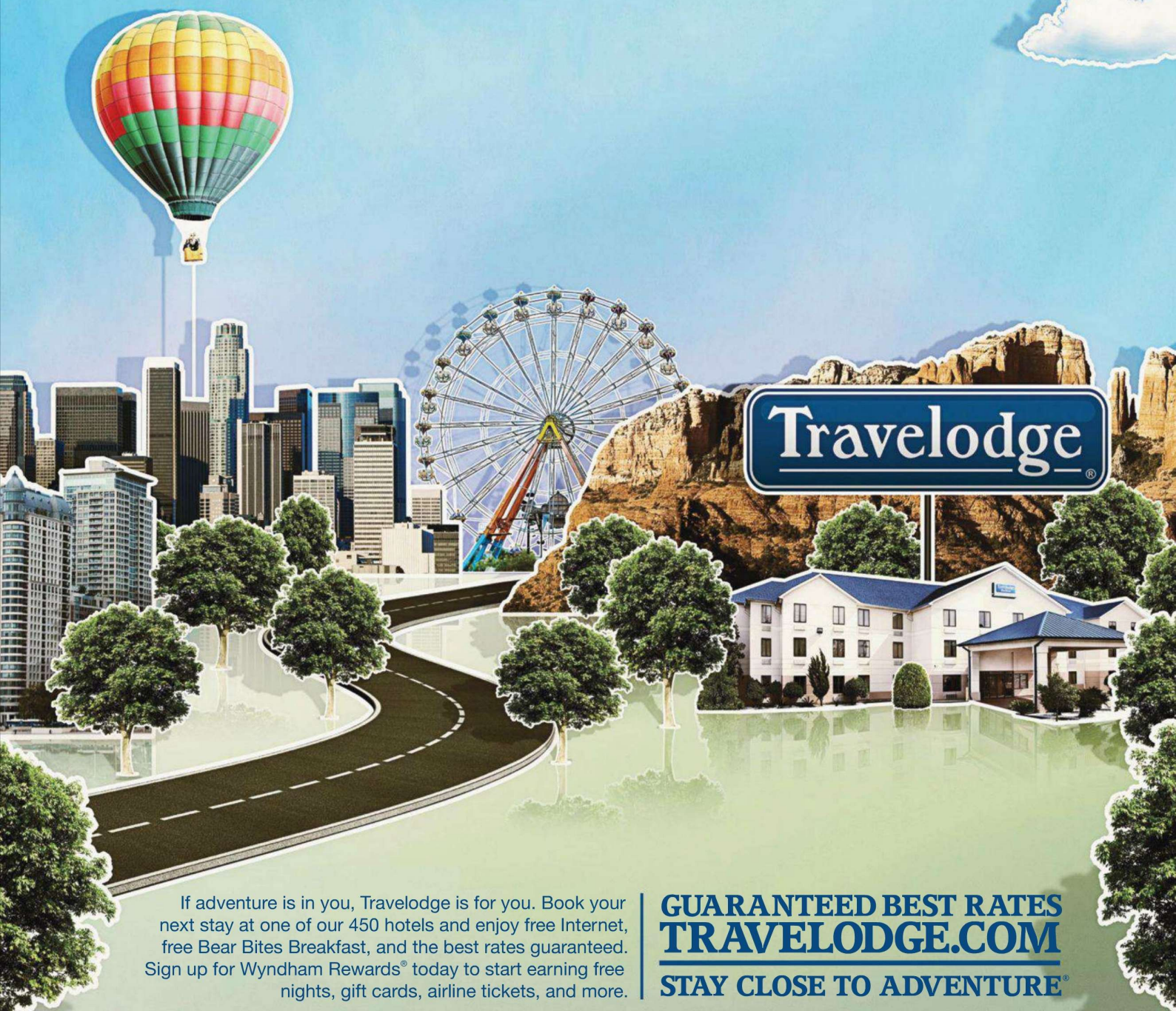
collection and a gallery of Roman animal sculptures at the Vatican Museums. A little off the beaten track but near the Colosseum, the **Basilica of San Clemente** is an archaeological layer cake; enter through the postcard shop, then take the steps down to an early Christian church and, below that, an even older pagan cult room from the end of the second century A.D.

IL COLOSSEO Kids do a double take when they get their first look at the enormous **Colosseum**, and they can't get enough of the gladiators—the modern-day ones pose for pictures at the entrance. Tour the amphitheater, which had seating for 50,000 spectators when it opened in A.D. 80, then cross the street to see **Ludus Magnus**, a partially excavated training camp for the Colosseum warriors with a practice ring and sleeping cells. Kids can play Spartacus

and learn to wield swords at the **Roman Gladiator School** (www.viator.com), led by members of the Historic Group of Rome.

HEAD FOR THE HILLS The beautiful, green Aventine—least known of Rome's famous seven hills—has a park on top and an ancient church, **Santa Maria del Priorato**; look through the Aventine Keyhole by the door for a framed view of St. Peter's across the Tiber River. Watch the colorful changing of the guard at the **Italian President's Palace** on the Quirinal Hill, or climb the Pincio overlooking Piazza del Popolo; when the view palls, kids can work off steam riding pedal cars. Just below the Capitoline in the center of Rome, a glass-lined elevator takes imperial eaglets to one of Rome's highest aeries atop the **Vittorio Emanuele II Monument**. Pick out the Colosseum and the Spanish Steps from the viewing terrace up top. ■

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Harbor Masterpiece

OFF THE SHIP IN HALIFAX, THE MARITIMES' MOST PICTURESQUE PORT

By EVERETT POTTER

ONE HUNDRED YEARS after trying to rescue passengers on the *Titanic*, Halifax remembers the disaster. The Nova Scotian capital has a bevy of the ship's artifacts, as well as a bounty of local seafood and a strong seafaring tradition.

TITANIC TOUR When the R.M.S. *Titanic* sank off the coast of Newfoundland in 1912, rescue ships were sent from Halifax, the closest major port. Alas, they quickly became recovery ships as they retrieved only corpses and wreckage from the frigid North Atlantic. **Blair Beed**, a local historian whose grandfather helped during the catastrophe, brings the tales to life, with stories about many of the passengers. His tour (902-455-9977; \$150 for up to six people) includes the home of local millionaire George Wright, who went down with the ship, as well as **Fairview Lawn Cemetery**, where 121 *Titanic* victims are interred. At the **Old Triangle Irish Alehouse**, have a proper seafaring lunch of fish and chips and a pint of Propeller India Pale Ale. (3 hours)

MUSEUM RAMBLE Halifax has three dynamic museums within walking distance of the waterfront. **The Maritime Museum of the Atlantic** displays ship models and artifacts, but it also features a deck chair from the *Titanic* and an exhibit on the North Atlantic cable ships, such as the *Mackay-Bennett*, that participated in the recovery effort. **Pier 21 National Historic Site** is the last "immigration shed" left in Canada. Akin to Ellis Island, it's now a museum with exhibits commemorating the million-plus immigrants who entered Canada via this wharf. Wander through the **Art Gallery of Nova Scotia** with works by Canadian artists, including renowned folk painter Maud Lewis, whose house is on display. (3 hours)

HALIFAX ON THREE WHEELS After Vicki Gesner kick-starts her Ural motorcycle—with you in the sidecar—she'll take you on an exhilarating tour of this city and its neighboring coastline. **Bluenose Sidecar Tours** is run by Gesner and her husband, and their tour to the fishing village of Peggy's Cove includes a visit to the Swissair

Flight 111 Memorial. Lunch at the **Brooklyn Warehouse**, a hangout where locals feast on burgers topped with Prince Edward Island cheddar, and sip Gaspereau Muscat, a Nova Scotian wine. (4 hours)

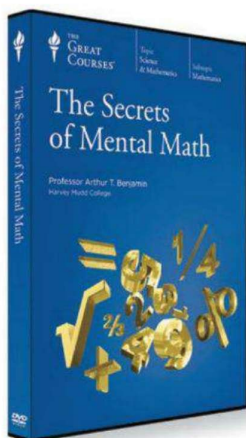
TASTE OF TOWN The **Halifax Seaport Farmers' Market** is one of North America's oldest—dating to 1750—and is now housed on the waterfront, a jumble of stalls selling smoked salmon, artisanal cheeses, and breads. Buy enough for a picnic, and head to the roof for an open-air repast while looking over to Georges Island. Afterward, ramble the hilly streets to get a feel for this university town through its used bookshops, such as **Trident Booksellers**. The city's highest point, the **Citadel**, offers 360-degree views of the harbor and town from a fort built to safeguard the British Navy. For dinner, head to **Chives**, where chef Craig Flinn began Nova Scotia's locavore movement a decade ago. His lobster-crusted haddock is sublime. Then catch a local singer at the **Carleton Music Bar and Grill**, the best live-music venue in town. (3 hours) ■



Scenic Peggy's Cove is home to only three dozen residents.

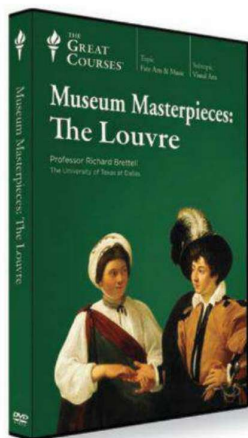
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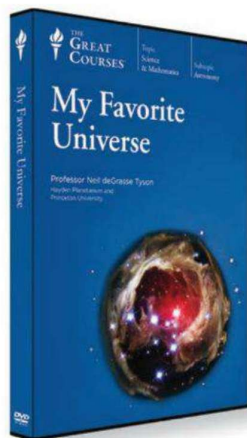
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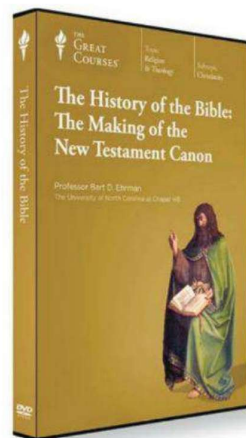
In **Museum Masterpieces: The Louvre**, expert art critic and historian Professor Richard Brettell takes you on an unforgettable journey through one of the world's greatest museums. This 12-lecture series explores some of the most beautiful and renowned examples from the museum's remarkable collection of masterworks.

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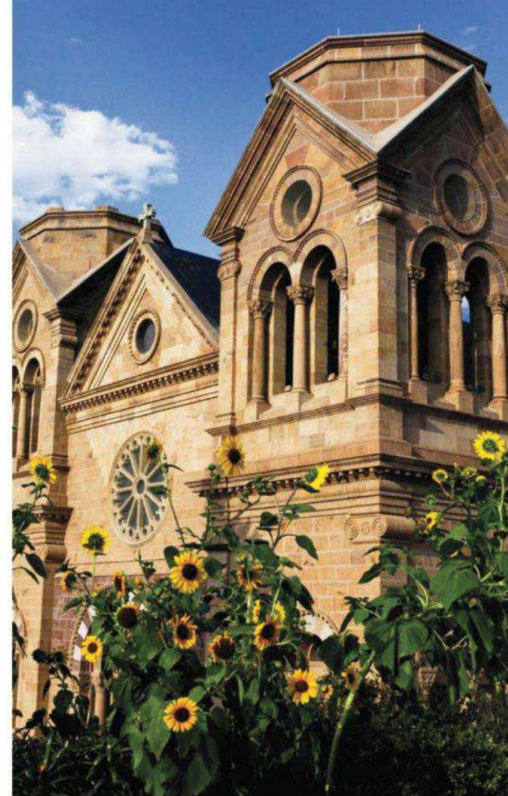
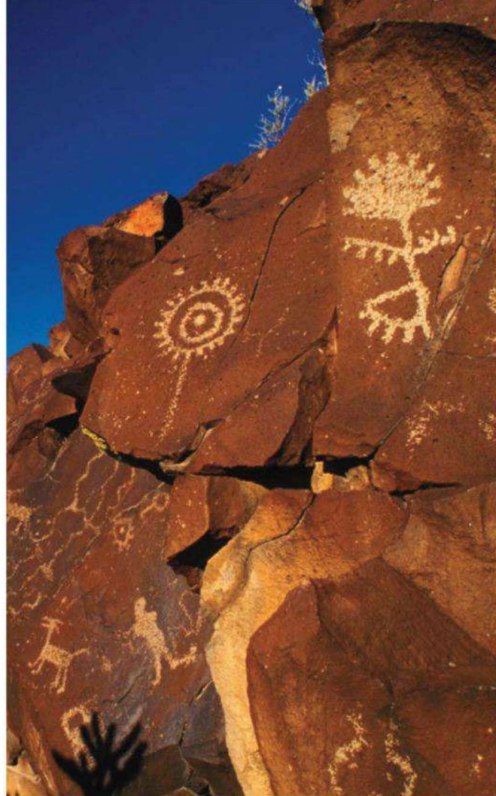
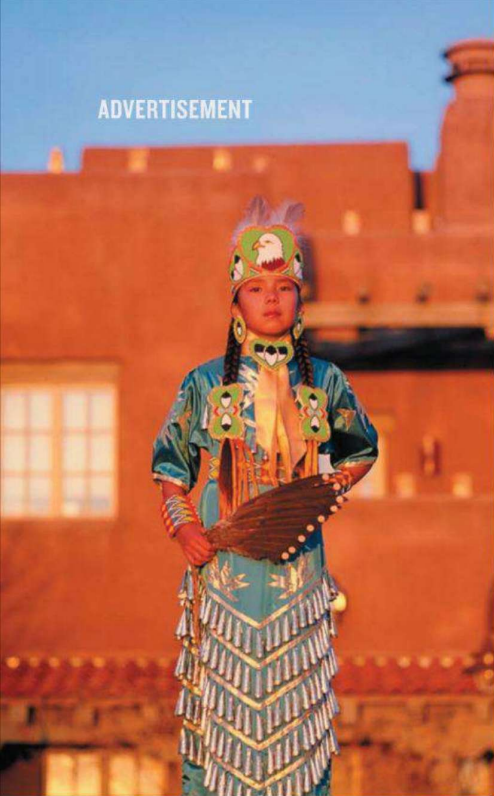
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By **MARYELLEN DUCKETT**

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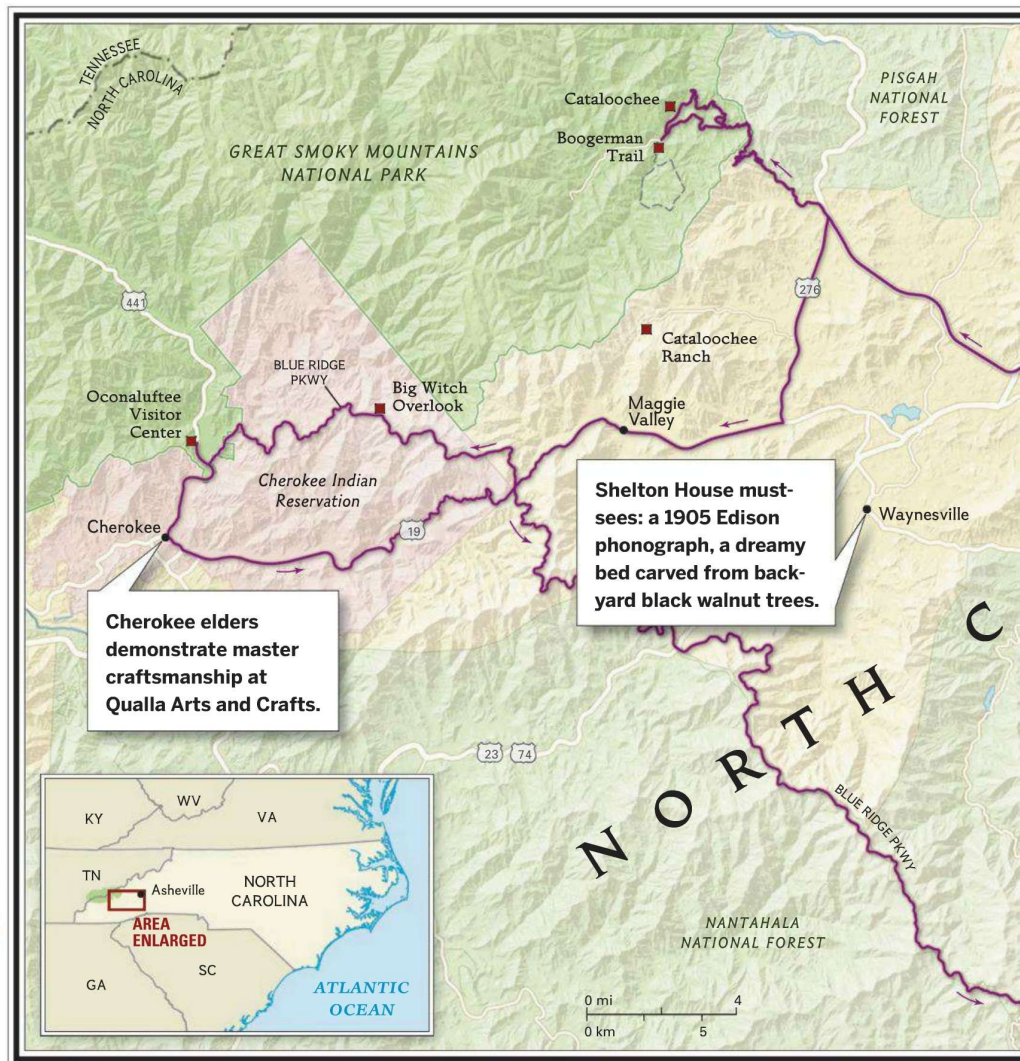
IN THE EARLY 1900s, outdoorsman Horace Kephart likened the Great Smoky Mountains to an “Eden still unpeopled and unspoiled.” A century later, the range the Cherokees once called the “land of the blue mist” stars as the showpiece of America’s most popular national park, drawing nine million annual visitors. Most enter through a jumble of go-kart tracks and outlet stores along Tennessee’s neon-bright Gatlinburg–Pigeon Forge gateway corridor. But for those who know where to look, the Smokies still offer the “wild beauty and grandeur” that entranced Kephart, who led the campaign for national park designation. Sneaking in through the back door, on the quieter North Carolina side, offers savvy travelers near-private viewings of the park’s unrivaled biodiversity, including 1,660 species of flowering plants as well as deer, elk, and black bears. Those fortunate few can also relish ethereal, blue-haze valleys in peaceful solitude.

Asheville serves as the North Carolina headquarters of the 469-mile Blue Ridge Parkway, with the Great Smokies as its southwestern bookend. Though the city is known best for its 250-room **Biltmore Estate**, a French Renaissance vision in Gilded Age opulence, its laid-back residents are more likely to be found at a drum circle or bluegrass jam—a banjo cradled in one arm, a pint of local brew in the other hand.

Art galleries and indie coffee shops and bistros line the historic downtown, attracting a congenial mix of buskers enlivening street corners, young couples pushing strollers, and active retirees lacing up hiking boots. Duck into bookstore **Malaprop’s** to peruse North Carolina authors and perk up with a Pigment of Your Imagination latte.

IMMERSE

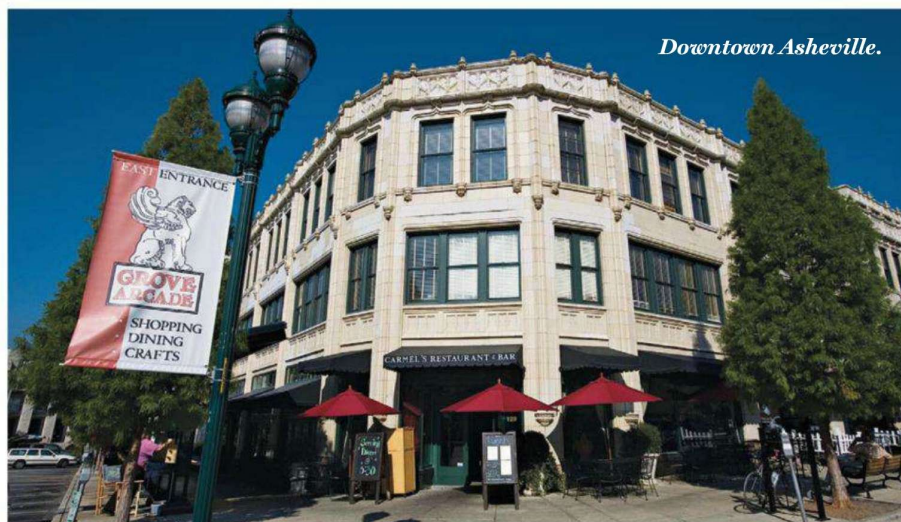
The arts have long thrived in the Smokies, from Cherokee baskets (below) to Appalachian quilts. Today, folk artisans carry on homespun mountain traditions, while a new generation of contemporary artists invigorates western North Carolina’s art scene. Consider Asheville its Soho, with galleries downtown and along the French Broad River in a gritty warehouse zone. Arts utopia **Black Mountain College** closed in 1957 (after influencing the likes of Robert Rauschenberg), but gallery shows at its downtown **Arts Center** still stir discourse. The **Asheville Art Museum** elevates regional art (this spring spotlighting Harvey Littleton’s luminescent blown glass). East of town, the **Folk Art Center** exhibits the wares of the Southern Highland Craft Guild.



Distance: 75 MILES (ONE WAY) FROM ASHEVILLE TO CHEROKEE **When to go:** APRIL THROUGH NARROW, WINDING, AND UNLIT AFTER DARK. **Plan your trip:** FOR TRAIL MAPS, CURRENT ROAD

Just south of downtown, the **North Carolina Arboretum** beckons with 65 acres of cultivated gardens and more than ten miles of hiking and biking trails. Walkways seam the blocky Quilt Garden, a living take on the Appalachian craft (digest the whole pattern from an overlook). Over in the bonsai garden, endemic Blue Ridge trees such as American hornbeam and eastern white pine are painstakingly cultivated, some into tiny, artful replicas of the mountain landscape.

Back in Asheville, head 30 miles west toward the Smokies on I-40. This mostly rural stretch of interstate, where wildflowers sprout in medians, skirts the edge of the sprawling Pisgah National Forest, a pristine hardwoods wilderness laced with waterfalls, white-water rapids, and mile-high peaks.



Downtown Asheville.



OCTOBER **Tip:** VISIT THE CATALOOCHIE VALLEY BY MIDDAY. THE GRAVEL ENTRANCE ROAD IS CLOSURES, AND MORE PARK INFORMATION, VISIT WWW.NPS.GOV/GRSM.

EAT

Downtown Asheville's funky **Early Girl Eatery** brightens Wall Street, a slim cobblestone lane just south of the Grove Arcade, a restored 1929 indoor public market. Cheery blue and yellow walls feature works by local artists, and windows overlook Pritchard Park, a popular gathering spot. The kitchen sends out breakfast favorites all day but also excels in playful takes on Southern comfort food, such as sweet potato black bean cakes with honeyed beets. Make time to stroll through the Arcade, filled with boutiques and galleries.



SLEEP

Mile-high **Cataloochee Guest Ranch** borders the national park, affording easy access to wildflower walks and bird-watching. Spotty cell service encourages recharging on analog pleasures, from badminton to banjo jams (*above*) and after-supper barn stomps. Appalachian quilts cover beds in private cabins and in snug rooms in the Ranch House, a converted cattle barn with a grand fireplace and gleaming log beams. From Maggie Valley, the ranch is three miles up Fie Top Road.

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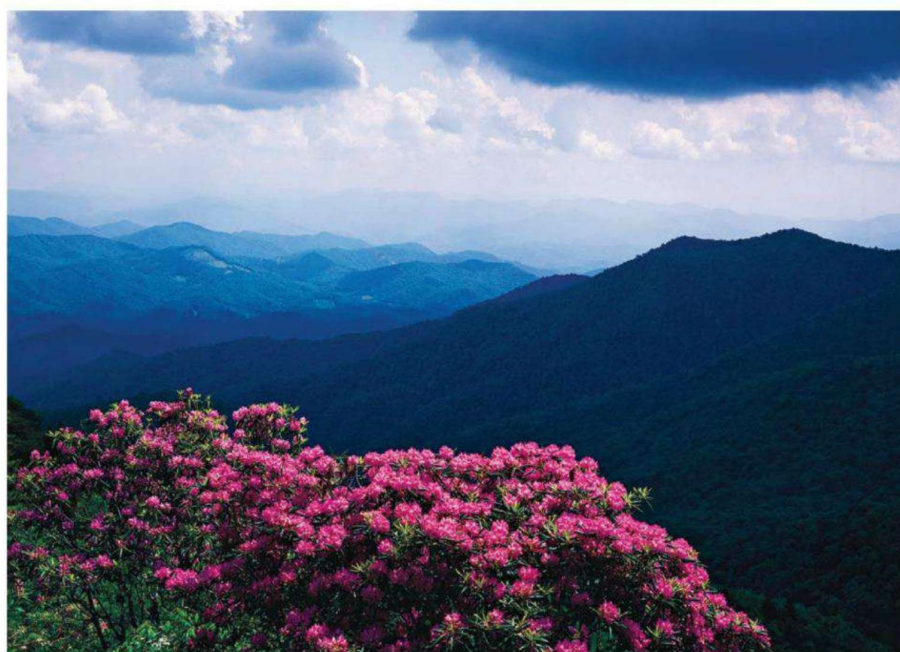


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Catawba rhododendrons ring the highest Smokies peaks (above). Deer spar in fields (right), such as at Cataloochee.

Few day visitors to the national park venture to the remote **Cataloochee Valley**, accessed from I-40 via a serpentine, packed gravel mountain road (without guardrails). Entering the park through this secluded southeastern gateway provides spectacular views of the surrounding 6,000-foot summits as well as a glimpse into Smokies life before the creation of the park.

Once home to a thriving farming and tourism community of 1,200, the valley is now populated by native wild turkeys and deer as well as majestic elk, successfully reintroduced to the park in 2001 after an absence of more than 200 years. To admire the 600-pound behemoths huddling in mist-shrouded meadows, plan to visit by midmorning or early evening. (Bring binoculars to view them from a safe distance.)

Follow Little Cataloochee Trail to discover the isolated valley's historic frame buildings that date to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Ring the church bell inside **Little Cataloochee Baptist**, a plain white chapel built in 1889, and slip inside the 1864 **Hannah Cabin**, with its original handmade brick chimney, to see the sleeping loft. Carefully drive back to the main road, and then hike all or part of the seven-mile **Boogerman Trail** loop, and reap the restorative rewards that come from walking in silence through towering old-growth woods. The trail, named for a Cataloochee pioneer, zigzags along and over the rushing water of Caldwell Fork through a quintessential Smokies forest: damp, lush, and thick with hemlocks, rhododendrons, and flowering highland dog hobble.



Pull off the Blue Ridge Parkway at milepost 461.9 at **Big Witch Overlook** (elevation 4,150 feet), named for Tskil-e'gwa, a Cherokee medicine man and tribal elder. Spread a blanket on the grassy ridgetop to bask in unobstructed mountain views. In May and June, the panorama glows deep pink and red with blooming flame azalea and pink-shell rhododendron.

Reenter the national park at the end of the parkway for a crash course in Smokies heritage at the bright new **Oconaluftee Visitor Center**, which focuses on the people who lived and worked here, including those displaced to create the park. Exhibits such as "Voices of the Smokies" feature the personal histories of early settlers; "Corn in a Jar" offers a moonshine primer including a replica of a Tennessee white lightning still.

Behind the visitors center, join a ranger-led tour of the **Mountain Farm Museum**, an authentic Smokies log homestead complete with farmhouse, barn, smokehouse, apple house, blacksmithing shop, and corncribs. May through October, reenactors demonstrate early 20th-century mountain life. Elk can often be seen gathering in the surrounding meadows at dusk.

Nearby, the town of Cherokee sits close

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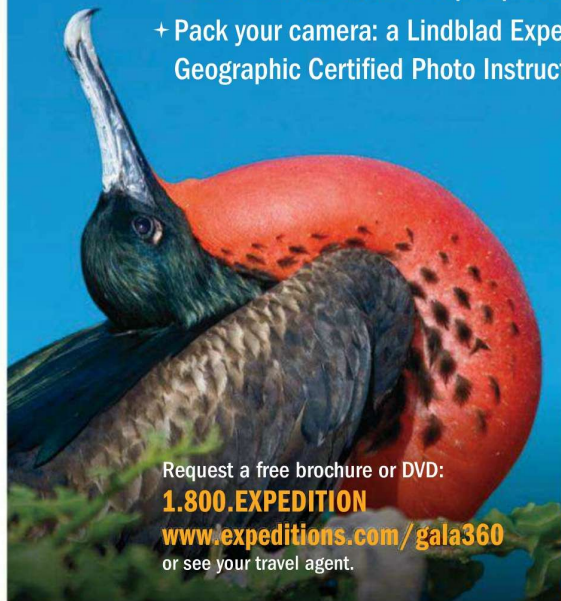
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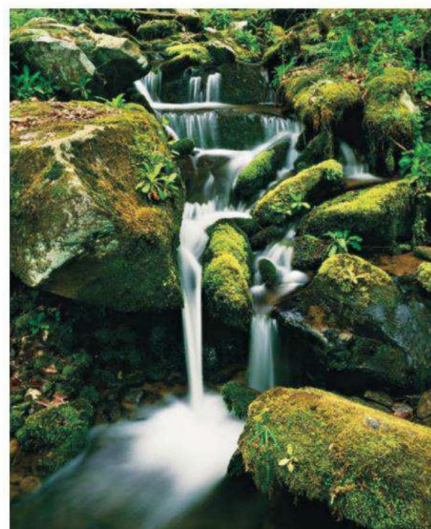
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Ample rainfall creates the park's namesake fog and countless cascades.

to the center of the Qualla Boundary, current home of the 12,500-member Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. Skip Cherokee's tacky shops and teepees (the native residents lived in wood cabins). Head instead to the **Museum of the Cherokee Indian**, a stop along the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail. At the entrance stands a 20-foot statue of Chief Sequoyah, inventor of the Cherokee alphabet, here chiseled from a single California redwood. Inside, start in the Story Lodge for an overview of ancient tribal myths; then trace 10,000 years of Cherokee history on a self-guided tour.

Across the street is **Qualla Arts and Crafts** (see page 70 for more on the region's arts heritage), the nation's oldest Native American cooperative. Browse the extensive collection for sale, from Darrin Bark's glossy black vases to Lori Reed's narrative prints.

From Cherokee, the Blue Ridge Parkway offers a slow (top speed: 45 miles an hour) but rewarding route back to Asheville, forming scallops past turnoffs such as the **Devil's Courthouse** overlook trail (milepost 422.4). The half-mile path climbs straight up to the rocky 5,720-foot summit. The payoff is a 360-degree view; look for peregrine falcons circling above the valley.

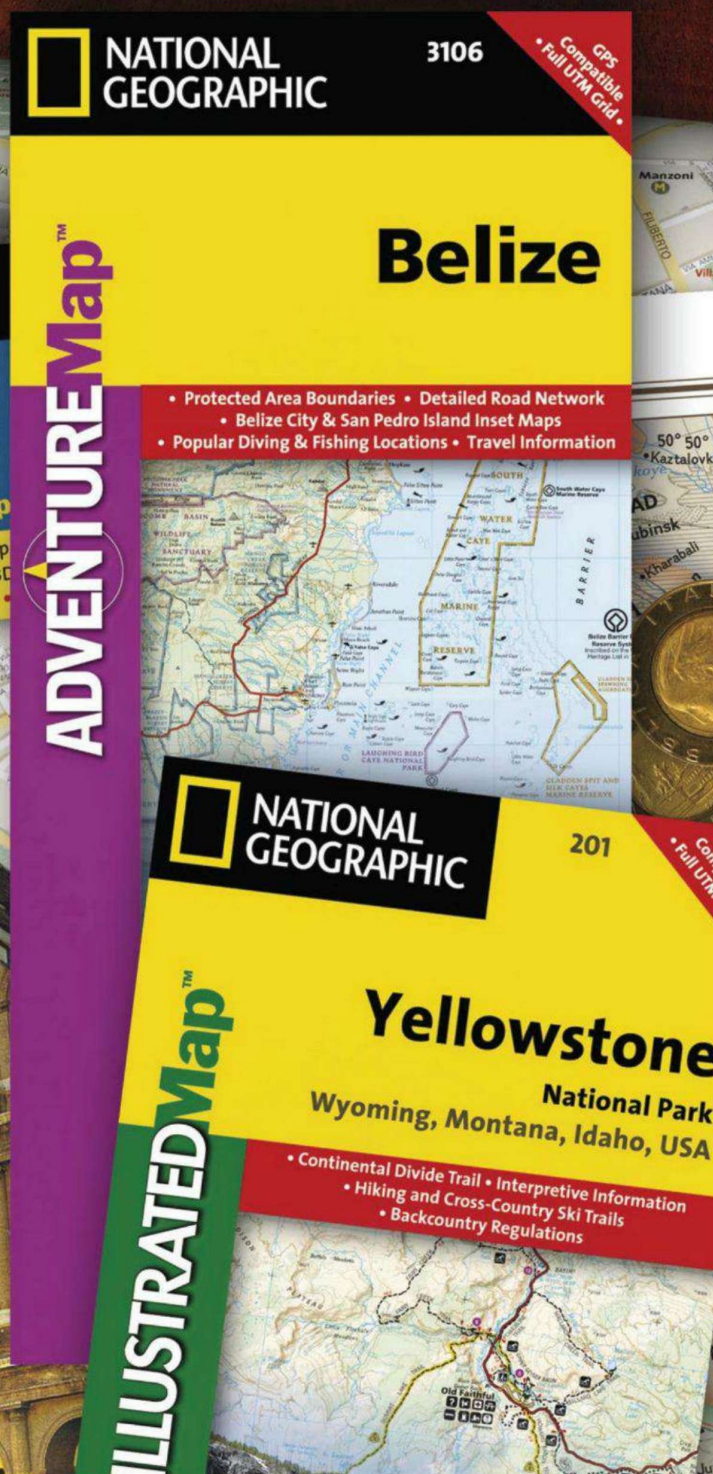
For a quicker return to Asheville, cut across Maggie Valley via Highway 19 and I-40. Unwind from your mountain ramble at **Jack of the Wood**, a Celtic-style pub that hosts live music. Sample the handcrafted English ale made at nearby Green Man Brewery, one of ten microbreweries to take advantage of the city's soft, pH-balanced mountain water. At the packed Thursday night bluegrass jam, pickin' starts at 6:30 p.m. In true Appalachian form, everyone's welcome to join in.

MARYELLEN DUCKETT has lived in the eastern Tennessee foothills of the Smokies since 1984.

WILLARD CLAY/GETTY IMAGES (WATERFALLS)



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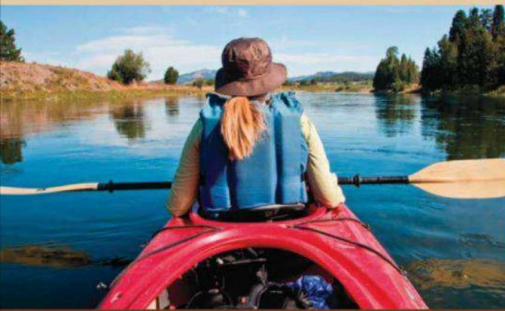


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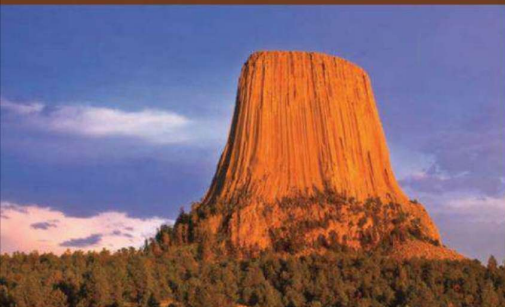
ROAM FREE IN WYOMING



BIG ADVENTURE, BIG HEART



Wyoming is often called the first state in outdoor America. From the thrill seeker to the nature lover, Wyoming has something to please everyone.



When you roam through Wyoming, you'll explore two national parks (including the nation's first), experience untouched nature, and discover fascinating Americana. Wyoming's copious attractions and outdoor activities—all at budget-friendly prices—will thrill both families and the most intrepid travelers.

Nearly two-thirds of the world's geysers are located in **Yellowstone**, the first designated national park, and you could spend days exploring these geothermal phenomena. Yellowstone also offers camping, horseback riding, and hiking excursions. The park boasts an abundance of wildlife, such as eagles, bears, bison, and elk. To the south, **Grand Teton National Park** is perfect for hiking and biking. The superb scenery, crowned by a visit to the cowboy town of **Jackson Hole**, will make the Grand Tetons a vibrant addition to your itinerary. Another spectacular destination is **Devils Tower**, in the northeast corner of the state. This immense rock formation rises a dramatic 1,267 feet and is a favorite spot for hiking and climbing.

Wyoming hosts the nation's largest outdoor rodeo and Western celebration, **Cheyenne Frontier Days**, each July in Cheyenne. This ten-day event includes country and rock music performances, parades, and free pancake breakfasts, and features an Indian village.

Another way to experience the authentic American West is by visiting Wyoming's many museums and historic sites. The **National Museum of Wildlife Art** in Jackson Hole demonstrates the influence of nature on fine art. In Thermopolis, kids and parents will love the **Wyoming Dinosaur Center**, especially "Jimbo," the Supersaurus, one of the largest dinosaurs ever mounted. Casper's **National Historic Trails Interpretive Center** features living history presentations about those who traveled the Oregon, Mormon, California, and Pony Express trails in the 1800s.

Much like the landscape, the folks in Wyoming are memorable and inviting. With an average of six people per square mile, this big state feels more like a neighborly small town with a big heart, which will make you want to roam to Wyoming again and again.

Photos: (left bottom) Devils Tower National Monument; (left top) kayaking the Snake River; (top) bison with the Grand Tetons in the background



Wyoming

IT'S NOT WHAT YOU'RE
GETTING AWAY FROM, IT'S WHAT YOU'RE
GETTING AWAY TO.

ROAM FREE AT WYOMINGTOURISM.ORG

forever west™

Yellowstone National Park

A photograph of a blue steam locomotive pulling into a station. A man wearing a flat cap and a patterned shirt is visible in the cab. The locomotive is emitting a large plume of white steam. The background shows green trees and a blurred sky, suggesting motion.

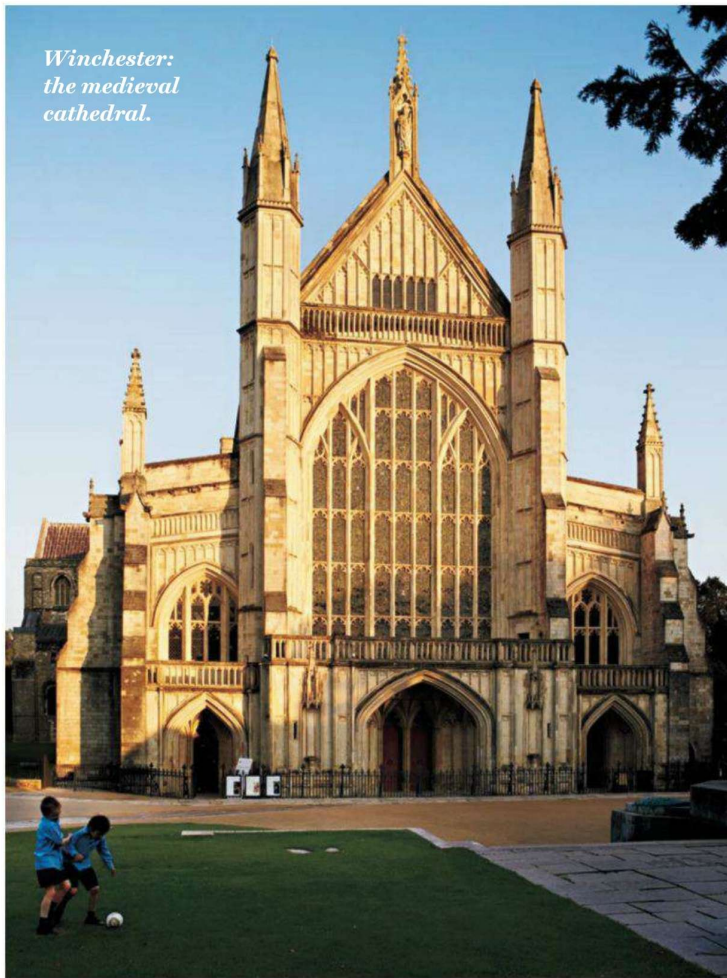
*Hampshire:
A Watercress Line
steam train pulls into
the town of Alresford.*

Now Leaving **LONDON**

5 GREAT GETAWAYS BY TRAIN

Escape Olympics mania and discover a land of
quaint villages and surprising cities—
all a quick rail journey from the British capital

Photographs by John Kernick



*Winchester:
the medieval
cathedral.*

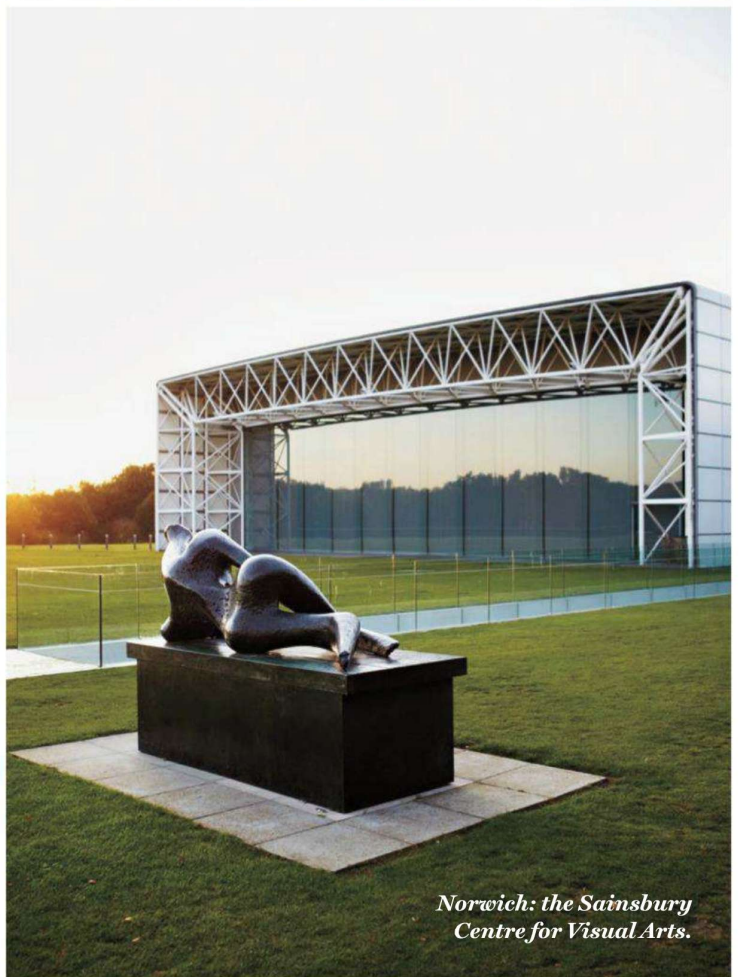


Norwich: the Tea House.



PHOTO CREDIT

*Calais: an open-
air market on
Place Foch.*



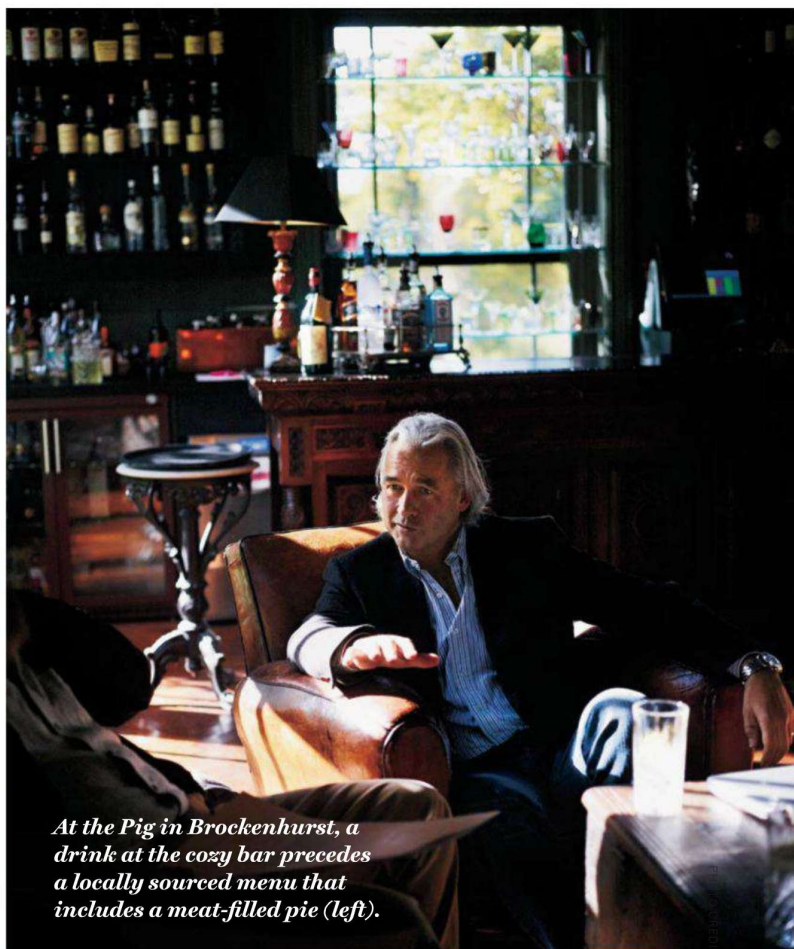
*Norwich: the Sainsbury
Centre for Visual Arts.*

The Destinations



London is making Olympic efforts to ready itself for this summer's games. But within a hundred miles of the big city are destinations that capture the essence of what makes England a true winner for travelers. ¶ Yes, there are castles, prehistoric hilltop standing stones, and elegant Georgian terraces along south-coast beaches, but there are many unexpected travel treasures as well. England's heartland cities and

dockside towns have emerged from a postindustrial gloom to become arts, design, and culinary hubs, while pages from Victorian novels can be relived in country house hotels that now favor chic over chintz. Escape the city and you'll get a taste of authentic British—and even French—cultures, both contemporary and historical. Here we give you five itineraries, with insider tips from the editors at our U.K. edition, *National Geographic Traveller*.



At the Pig in Brockenhurst, a drink at the cozy bar precedes a locally sourced menu that includes a meat-filled pie (left).

Highclere Castle, home to the Carnarvon family since 1679, doubles as Downton Abbey in the popular TV series.



TO THE MANOR BORN

Hampshire and Salisbury

90 MINUTES FROM WATERLOO STATION
TO SALISBURY

WIND ALONG THE sweeping drive toward Highclere Castle—the setting for *Downton Abbey*, the Emmy Award-winning period drama of upstairs-downstairs life at an English mansion, now filming its third season—and the world of the Crawleys and their servants slowly emerges. The pinnacled Victorian pile, atop a thousand acres of parkland, is an evocative place to start exploring historical fantasies and realities: “Let the building show you the way,” says current chatelaine Lady Carnarvon.

Built on the site of a medieval banqueting hall, the castle lies near Newbury, 60 miles west of London. It offers panoramic views across the wooded slopes and rolling downlands of North Hampshire. With 250-year-old cedars, wildflowers, and sheep dotting the grounds, it’s no surprise that a patient recovering there during the First World War proclaimed it “a paradise I thought I had lost.” Now, as then, Highclere is a lively community, “laughing and sharing life together,” says Lady Carnarvon.

From Highclere, head southwest to Salisbury, the cathedral city immortalized in John Constable’s 19th-century landscape paintings. Salisbury’s medieval cathedral inspired the fictional Kingsbridge cathedral

in Ken Follett’s novel *The Pillars of the Earth*. It holds the best preserved copy of the Magna Carta—the 1215 charter of citizens’ rights familiar to every civics student. Climb Britain’s tallest spire to see Salisbury’s water meadows; the ditches and sluices once used for irrigation are now populated by wading birds and turquoise damselflies. Near the cathedral, stallholders selling hog roasts, honey, olives, and English wines gather for the Charter Market, held twice weekly since the 13th century.

At St. Thomas’s Church, where the cathedral builders worshipped, look out for the giant “Doom” painting: “The alewife giving the devil a jug of ale was modeled on a local brothel keeper,” says Michael Bowyer, a Chelsea Flower Show gold medalist who designs the cathedral’s floral displays.

Follow up with cream teas and croquet at Mompesson House, where some scenes from *Sense and Sensibility* (starring Kate Winslet) were filmed.

A few miles away stands Stonehenge, the “heaven temple” of stone slabs on Salisbury Plain where Thomas Hardy’s tragic heroine Tess of the d’Urbervilles was arrested. Farther south, lose yourself in the depths of the New Forest, one of Britain’s newest national parks, just as Tess did in Hardy’s novel. With wild ponies, snug pubs, and fine weather, the park is walkers’ and cyclists’ heaven. Outfitter Cyclexperience has tandems for hire.

Bed down in Brockenhurst at the Pig, an ivy-clad country house hotel with log fires, reclaimed oak floors, and a walled garden that furnishes the

HAMPSHIRE

ESTATES OF YOUR OWN

Swan about like the Countess of Grantham at these posh manses with rooms for rent. The 17th-century Lainston House boasts nine aviaries and is set on 63 acres of parkland.

Serene gardens surround the Victorian-era Tynney Hall, where guests take tea in a lounge whose ornate ceiling was imported piece by piece from a Florentine palace. Jane Austen herself may have visited Langrish House, just a few miles from her cottage in Chawton.

“
**The Chilli
 Pickle, a
 determinedly
 contemporary
 Indian
 restaurant
 in Brighton,
 serves an
 authentic
 pan-Indian
 menu with a
 backing track
 of Bollywood
 classics.**
 ”

—Sarah Barrell,
 associate editor,
 NG Traveller (U.K.)

kitchen with fruit, vegetables, and herbs. You can join the hotel's wild-food forager, Garry Eveleigh, to find New Forest delicacies such as rose hips, hazelnuts, and mushrooms for the Pig's menus. "Everyone who walks with me is blown away by the sheer beauty of the forest, the wildlife, and the food you can find. It's a magical place," says Eveleigh. His ingredient hunts take him as far as the south coast for seaweed and shellfish.

Pick up the trail to Tess's final destination, Wintoncester—or Winchester, as it's known in real life. Gastronomers regularly make the pilgrimage to eat at the Chesil Rectory, which serves up classics including Sunday roasts and gooseberry fool in Winchester's oldest house. Michelin-starred modern British cooking, strong on local produce, awaits at the Black Rat. Ginger Two combines tea and cakes with quirky home accessories in its boutique/café.

The Hat Fair, Britain's longest running street theater festival, takes place in Winchester in July. Acrobats, puppeteers, and fire performers breathe fresh life into the town's narrow lanes.

Beneath the streets, in Winchester Cathedral's crypt, Antony Gormley's "Sound II" sculpture depicts a solitary figure, head bent, around which the waters that flood the space ebb and flow. A black tombstone marks Jane Austen's grave inside the cathedral—"a building she admired so much," according to her sister, Cassandra.

In the nearby village of Chawton, the redbrick cottage where Austen wrote *Emma* is now an intimate

museum. Jane's small wooden writing table still stands by the window, overlooking thatched cottages and fields little changed since her time.

Afterward, it's ten miles on to Alresford (pronounced ALLS-ford). Here you can hop on the Watercress Line steam railway for the 40-minute ride to Alton and a connecting train to London. Actor Colin Firth is reported to have a home in Alresford, a riverside market town with brightly painted Georgian houses, antiques shops, historic inns, and even a duck pond. It's every inch the bucolic England of Hollywood imagination. —Juliana Gilling

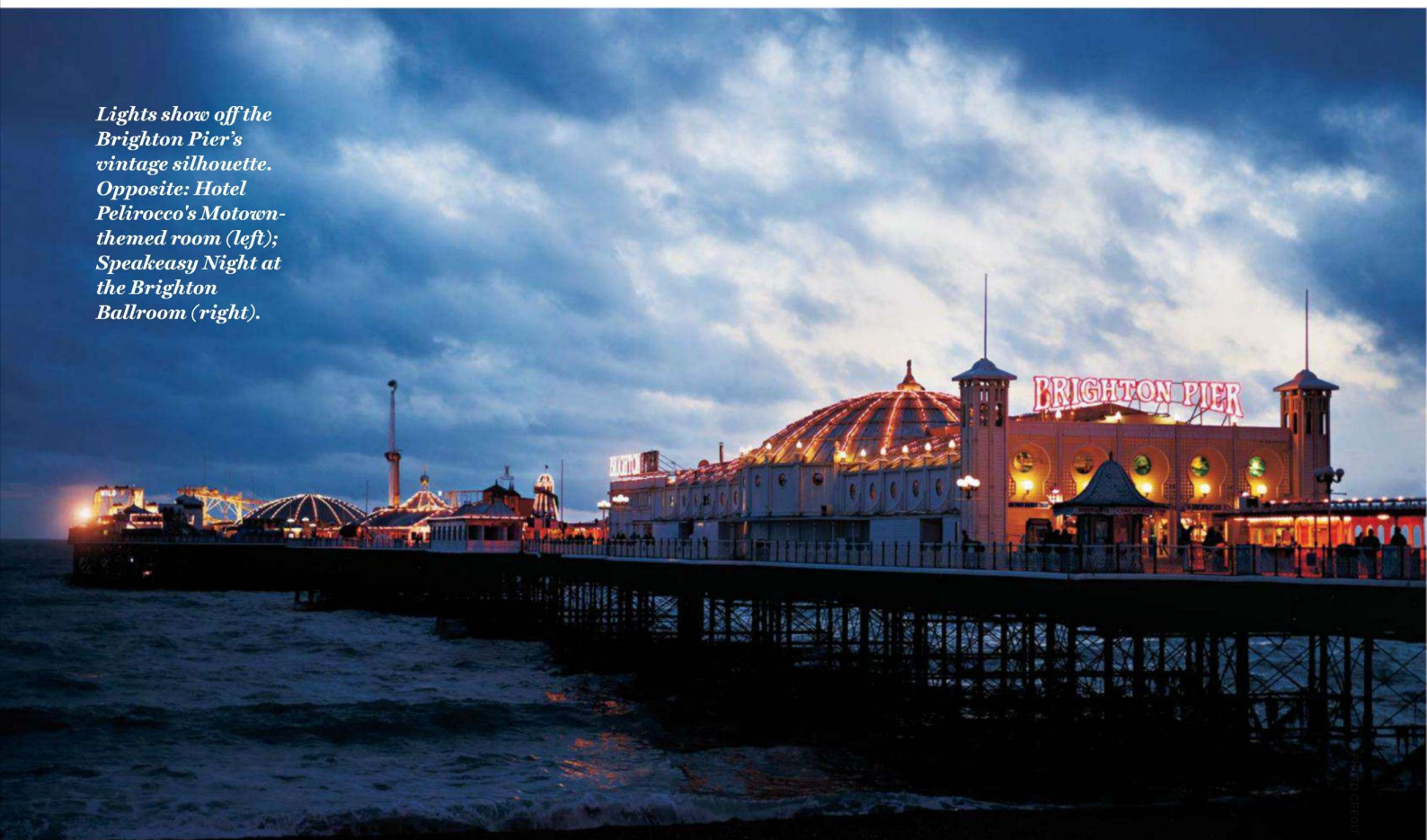
SAUCY BY THE SEASIDE

Brighton and the South Downs

ONE HOUR FROM VICTORIA STATION

NO BRITISH CITY EMBODIES full-blown English eccentricity better than Brighton. Blame it on George IV. He built the loopy, orientalist-inspired Royal Pavilion here as his seaside escape, helping to transform the relatively sedate fishing village of Brighthelmston into a fashionable Regency-era retreat. Yet Brighton is also the gateway to the South Downs and that quintessentially English ritual of the country walk. You can experience both the peculiar and the pastoral sides of the British

*Lights show off the
 Brighton Pier's
 vintage silhouette.
 Opposite: Hotel
 Pelirocco's Motown-
 themed room (left);
 Speakeasy Night at
 the Brighton
 Ballroom (right).*





personality after a quick trip south from London.

“Brighton is where kitsch meets sassy glamour,” says club promoter Ruth Allsop. “You can literally feel the buzz of the city as soon as you step off the train. Even the colors seem brighter.”

Allsop should know. As the planner of Margot’s Parties—open to the public (about \$15 for advance tickets) and held regularly at various local clubs—she has hosted themed bashes including an “ice queen and hot Cossack Christmas party that was awash in silver hot pants and fur-trimmed boots.”

If you miss one of her gatherings, Allsop suggests heading to the Concorde, “a spit-and-sawdust venue for live bands right on the beach.” Local DJ and artist Jacqueline Hammond recommends the Brighton Ballroom, a historic glass-domed building in the bohemian gay enclave of Kempdown that presents burlesque, cabaret, and speakeasies. For DJ Boogaloo Stu, nothing tops the Ballroom’s monthly Pop Kraft events: “On any given night you might find a hair salon, sock-puppet master classes, flash mob dances, fortune-telling, balloon modeling, and life drawing classes—all set to a pulsing party sound track.”

Traditionalists, though, will appreciate the Brighton Bandstand, just beyond the romantically decaying West Pier, where brass bands and dance troupes perform in the briny ocean air. The newest seaside attraction is the 164-foot-high Brighton Wheel, which provides aerial views of Brighton Pier’s old-fashioned funfair rides, arcade games, henna tattoo artists, and

BRIGHTON

ARTS MECCA

Brighton’s free spirit takes center stage during the Brighton Festival, the U.K.’s second largest arts festival (after Edinburgh’s). First held in 1967, the annual gathering now attracts over 300,000 people for avant-garde art, multimedia exhibitions, and musical spectacles. Former guest directors include Anish Kapoor and Aung San Suu Kyi. As guest director of this year’s festival, May 5-27, actress Vanessa Redgrave presents a retrospective of her work.

kiosks selling colorful sticks of Brighton’s signature candy rock.

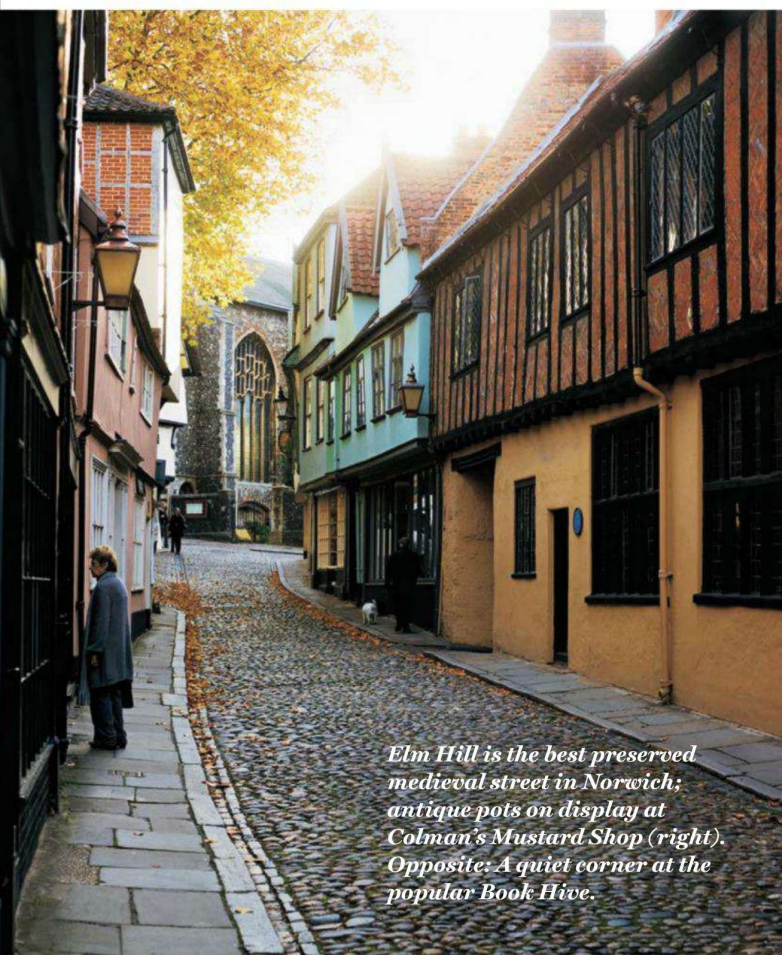
By day, Brighton’s anything-goes vibe infuses North Laine, a maze of cafés and indie boutiques such as Get Cutie, specializing in handmade dresses and tops in bold retro prints (think skulls-and-roses or cartoony toadstools).

To check out the vibrant local art scene, stroll down to the waterfront, where the Jag Gallery opens its working studios to visitors. Browse the collection of paintings and prints for sale or commission work directly from the sociable artists on-site.

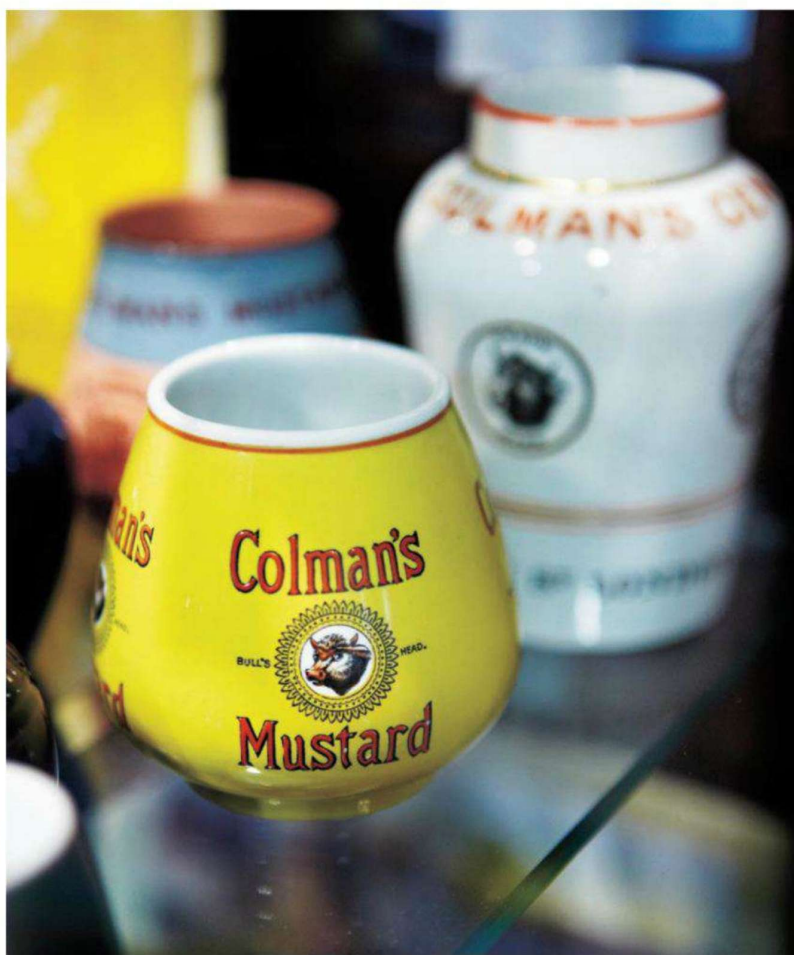
Not surprisingly, Brighton claims the best vegetarian restaurant in the country. Terre à Terre, on East Street, serves inventive meatless fare such as *halloumi* cheese marinated in tandoori spice, or red onion, mustard seed, and cumin crumpets with gingerroot chili jam.

Hotel Pelirocco matches the city’s Mad Hatter zeal with guest suites decorated in motifs ranging from Dolly Parton (Smoky Mountains mural) to Muhammad Ali (boxing ring).

Make a final Brighton pilgrimage to the grave of one Phoebe Hessel (1713-1821) in the cemetery of St. Nicholas’s Church. Hessel cross-dressed as a man for 17 years to make her living as an active soldier, escaped from a workhouse at the spry age of 93, and became a local celebrity supported by the Prince Regent. Call her the unstoppable patron saint of Brighton.



Elm Hill is the best preserved medieval street in Norwich; antique pots on display at Colman's Mustard Shop (right). Opposite: A quiet corner at the popular Book Hive.



Then trade glow sticks and go-go boots for walking sticks and Wellingtons on the South Downs Way, a 99-mile trail that winds from the beech woods of Hampshire to the chalk ridges of East Sussex.

Following the path east from Brighton, stop at Alfriston, the type of quaint English village in which Miss Marple might live. The Bloomsbury artists (Virginia Woolf and her sister, Vanessa Bell, among them) roosted at nearby Charleston Farmhouse, a country home bursting with their murals, textiles, and sculptures.

The walk's real climax, though, lies toward the finish line, at the Seven Sisters. This undulating series of chalk cliffs, topped by a green tuft of meadow, looks as bleached as an iceberg. In its own way, it's as flamboyantly dramatic as any rousing Saturday night out in Brighton. —*Raphael Kadushin*

BY THE BOOK

Norwich and Sandringham

TWO HOURS FROM LIVERPOOL STREET STATION

TWO LADIES WITH SHOPPING BAGS were eyeing the cheese and local Norfolk sausage in Norwich's 900-year-old marketplace when one turned to the other and asked, "Did you go to

NORWICH

MAD FOR MUSTARD

Described as "a potent symbol of Englishness," Colman's Mustard has been produced in Norfolk for nearly 200 years.

Located near Norwich Market, Colman's Mustard Shop and Museum chronicles the rise of Jeremiah Colman's mustard empire. Items on display include wartime mustard tins and art deco pots. You can buy a variety of mustards, along with more unusual products like mustard bath salts or even mustard chocolate.

Zadie Smith?" They were discussing the best-selling author of *White Teeth*, who'd been in town for one of the twice-yearly literary festivals organized and hosted by the University of East Anglia.

As even a first-time visitor will soon discover, Norwich loves writers. This is a place where people actually stop to chat about books and authors.

You don't have to be a writer or a bibliophile to love Norwich, but this ancient city in Norfolk has lots of tales to tell and a literary tradition that dates back to the 14th century.

The stories begin to unfold as soon as you hop into one of the City Boats outside Norwich's train station and glide down the River Wensum to the Norwich Cathedral Quarter. One of the most famous writers you've never heard of, Julian of Norwich, wrote her mystical treatise, *Revelations of Divine Love*, while walled up in a cell in St. Julian's on Kilderman Way. In so doing, the 14th-century anchoress became the first known woman to write a book in English.

It's easy to see why the atmospheric cathedral quarter, with its medieval parish churches and crooked stone buildings and half-timbered Tudor houses, would appeal to a writer. Historical novelist Rachel Hore, who moved here ten years ago, says that when she wanders the old streets, "it's as though voices from Norwich's past are whispering to me."

Visit in July, when the Lord Mayor's Celebration turns Norwich into a citywide carnival and the Shakespeare Festival transforms the cloisters of Norwich's



“

The coast outside Norwich has some of the wildest beaches in the country, including Holkham, the windswept stretch of sand that was featured in the last scenes of the movie *Shakespeare in Love*.

”

—Jo Gardner,
associate editor,
NG Traveller (U.K.)

PHOTO: M. REDDY

immense Romanesque cathedral into a stage for the Bard's plays.

Step inside Dragon Hall, a medieval trading hall with massive oak ceiling beams—a testament to a time when the city was nearly as rich and important as London, thanks to its lucrative wool trade and status as the capital of the pre-Norman kingdom of East Anglia.

Norwich's bookish flavor extends even to its dining and café scenes. The Library Restaurant Bar and Grill, next to the 15th-century Guildhall, serves local favorites such as pan-fried cod and wood-grilled chicken in a 19th-century library. Pop in for a piece of cake at the intimate Tea House on Elm Hill, the city's finest medieval street, and you may see a literary aspirant or two chasing the muse as they quaff a cuppa. One of the most popular literary hangouts is the Book Hive, a wonderfully browsable bookstore where author appearances draw adoring crowds.

“
**Samphire Hoe,
near the cliffs of
Dover, is a place
of wildflowers,
seafront walks,
and thriving
birdlife.**
”

—Maria Pieri,
editorial director,
NG Traveller (U.K.)



The White Cliffs of Dover have been memorialized in poetry, song, and film. Opposite: Visitors try land sailing on Dunkirk Beach's wide sands.

You probably won't hear any literary gossip at Sandringham, Queen Elizabeth's Norfolk estate 53 miles northwest of Norwich. But visiting the giant Victorian manse set amid woodlands, wetlands, and landscaped gardens, open to the public from April to early November, offers unique glimpses of the rural royal lifestyle enjoyed by four generations of England's monarchs. The outdoors-loving House of Windsor has never been known to harbor any literary pretensions, but Sandringham does have a famous library where the Queen delivered her first televised Christmas message in 1957, carrying on the tradition of her father, George VI, portrayed by Colin Firth in the movie *The King's Speech*.

Strolling through Sandringham's impeccably grand rooms, memorabilia-filled museum, and exquisitely maintained grounds is a very different experience from roaming down the cobbled lanes of lively, lit-loving Norwich. But it's precisely that contrast that makes a visit to this less touristy part of England so appealing. —Donald Olson

CHANNEL SURFING

Dover and Calais

ONE HOUR 20 MINUTES FROM ST. PANCRAS STATION,
THEN 90-MINUTE FERRY TO CALAIS, FRANCE

WITH THE FRENCH PORTS of Calais and Dunkirk so close to the U.K., you could very easily be sitting over *sole meunière* for lunch at a Calais bistro, having tucked into bacon and eggs in Blighty (as the Brits call their island home) a couple of hours before. It takes just an hour and a half to cross the 21 miles of English Channel from Dover to Calais, with boats departing approximately once an hour (to Dunkirk takes two hours). Links between these international ports have long been strong, forged by the dramatic events of two world wars—most significantly when, in 1940, a massive flotilla of British warships, pleasure boats, fishing boats, and private yachts evacuated more than 300,000 soldiers from Dunkirk's beaches.

A new exhibition on the evacuation of Dunkirk opened last year at the secret wartime tunnels at Dover Castle. Dover itself is “steeped in history,” says Jon Iveson, curator of the Dover Museum. The city is home not only to one of the oldest boats in the world, thought to be around 3,550 years old, but also to one of the finest medieval castles in Europe, with the best maintained freestanding Roman lighthouse in the world. “The forts of the Western Heights are also well worth a visit,” says Iveson, “forming some of the most impressive fortifications in Britain.”

The best place to stay in Dover, which lies 76 miles southeast of London, is actually three miles outside the town itself (an easy taxi ride from the train station). The Marquis at Alkham has six sleek guest rooms and an elegant restaurant that recently earned a rising Michelin star. A night at the Marquis offers the chance to experience the best of modern English cooking before nipping across the Channel to see how contemporary French cuisine compares.

Both Dunkirk and Calais still send out working fishing fleets, and French eateries such as Au Côte

DOVER

CHALK WALK

Long a welcome sight of home for Britons, the White Cliffs of Dover are best experienced by a dramatic cliff-top walk.

From Dover's Eastern Docks, climb the marked trail across the undulating chalk grassland for views of the English Channel and the French coast. Follow the trail to South Foreland Lighthouse, used by Marconi for the first international radio transmission.

From there, says Dover resident Debbie Dainton, "walk down one of the footpaths to Saint Margaret's at Cliffe, a medieval village with a picturesque bay surrounded by the white cliffs."



Birmingham

2 HOURS FROM EUSTON STATION



d'Argent in Calais and Restaurant L'Estouffade in Dunkirk serve a range of classic seafood dishes that change according to what the boats bring in each morning, from langoustines to haddock.

But lunch doesn't have to be a formal affair: When the weather is warm, stock up on pâté, olives, and smoked salmon from Dunkirk's Comtesse du Barry and gâteaux from Aux Doigts de Jean Bart patisserie, and picnic on the wide golden sands of Malo-les-Bains, the town's 4.3-mile stretch of beach. Operation Dynamo War Museum gives further insight into the wartime events that lifted this northern French town onto the world stage.

In Calais, don't miss the original "Burghers of Calais," a famed sculpture by Auguste Rodin located outside the Town Hall, itself a masterpiece of Flemish architecture (in medieval times, Calais and Dunkirk were part of Flanders). On Saturday mornings on the Place d'Armes, the air is thick with shouts of market stallholders and tempting smells: great slabs of Brie, hot waffles sizzling on open griddles, roasting coffee. Before boarding the ferry back to Dover, browse main shopping street Rue Royale's *fromageries* (cheese shops) and wine and chocolate shops for an edible souvenir. —Annabelle Thorpe

BIRMINGHAM

STORY OF SELFRIDGES

One of the U.K.'s signature stores was in fact founded by an American.

After helping guide Marshall Field to success in Chicago, Henry Gordon Selfridge opened Selfridges in London in 1909, drawing crowds by displaying the first monoplane to cross the English Channel.

In the same showman spirit, the store's Birmingham branch (above) gets people talking.

THIRTY YEARS AGO, Birmingham rarely appeared on travel itineraries. Though it's the biggest metropolis in the Midlands region of England, sitting squarely at the country's geographical heart, the city had seen better days. While the 19th century witnessed Birmingham's emergence as a crucial engine of the industrial revolution—a workhorse of factories, forges, and provincial wealth—the 20th century brought disaster and decline: German bombs, economic stagnation, rising unemployment.

But step off the train into the Birmingham of 2012, and you enter a place that looks like the result of a TV makeover show. You don't have to search far for evidence of its new image. Opened in 2003, the Selfridges department store has quickly become the city's greatest landmark, with its curves sheathed in 15,000 aluminum discs.

Walk the key nightlife drag of Broad Street and you gain a glimpse of the city's character—warm and defiantly unpretentious—in the bars scattered along this half-mile-long strip. Risa is a lively, gaudy watering hole that also hosts a comedy club, while Island Bar, nearby on Suffolk Street, is a cocktail bar where the Honey Berry Sour goes down nicely.

But there's more to modern Birmingham than party spirit. High culture also holds court. The Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery tells the city's backstory and contains one of the world's top collections of Pre-Raphaelite art. The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, one of Europe's finest classical companies, stirs hearts at Symphony Hall.

In Brindleyplace, an enclave of chic restaurants and shops, Café Ikon serves artisanal teas inside an art gallery. The Mailbox, a former Royal Mail sorting office, is now packed with boutique stores and hotels (including the Birmingham edition of the U.K.'s trendy Malmaison brand). The Jewellery Quarter houses outlets such as Highly Strung, a specialist in crafting bespoke dazzlers out of pearls and gemstones.

Head to Bournville, five miles southwest of the city center, and you trip over Cadbury World, an attraction centered on the famous chocolate producer, which has been based in the city since 1824. Here, you can immerse yourself in all things cocoa via exhibits, tastings, and a tour of the packing line.

Over in Balsall Heath, meanwhile, the culinary hot spot is the "Balti Triangle," a cluster of Indian and Pakistani restaurants (including the much lauded Al Frash) that stands as a symbol of Birmingham's multiethnic population. The district even has its own dish, the Balti: a meat curry that, served in a thin steel bowl and eaten with naan bread, was born in the city in the late 1970s.

Amid all this, Birmingham's former life has not been forgotten. The city's heavy-toil heritage has left it with a canal network that runs 35 miles. Nowadays, the barges that inch along the photogenic Main Line canal carry weekend cruisers rather than coal and raw metal. But order a pint of beer at the waterside Tap and Spile pub, and you can watch the past glide alongside the present all the same. —Chris Leadbeater



South Asian fashion at Rouge Boutique draws glances from passersby in the "Balti Triangle," a Birmingham area known for its Indian and Pakistani restaurants. Opposite: The design for Selfridges department store was partly inspired by the metal-plated gowns of Paco Rabanne.

Introducing the entirely new Acura RDX.

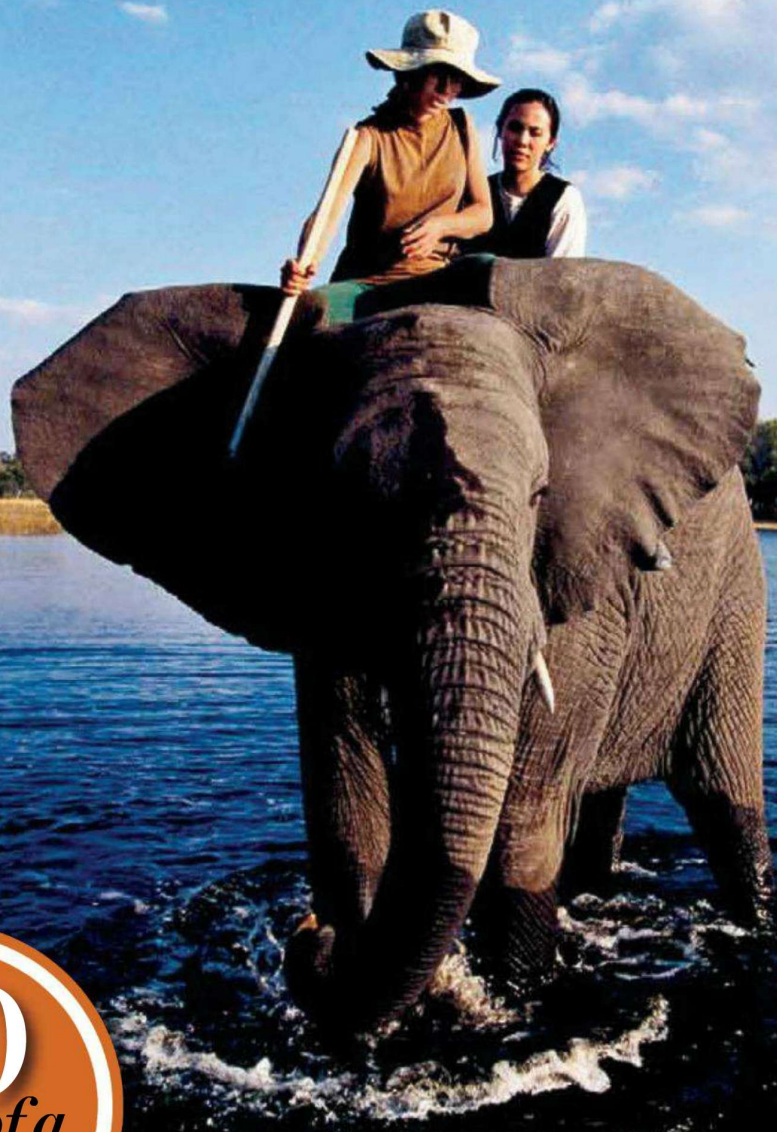


[illegible]

It's big without being too big. It's small without being not big enough. Powerful but not gluttonous. Stylish but not ostentatious. It has the best highway fuel mileage for a V-6 in its class, yet it boasts a surprising 273 horsepower. It's everything you're looking for in a luxury crossover. And more. And less. The entirely new Acura RDX.*

Our seventh annual list of the world's best guided trips: One of these could change your life

BY MARGARET LOFTUS



The Trans



formers



*A Sherpa and a yak
in Nepal's Khumbu,
near Everest.*

Whether they realize it or not, many people undertake great journeys to find answers to the questions of their lives.

Take Dick Grace. During a trip to Nepal more than 20 years ago with pioneer outfitter Mountain Travel, the former marine and California winemaker was struck by the young people he met. Over the years—and multiple trips—he became a Buddhist and set up a foundation to address their medical and educational needs. He recalls meeting one woman who had no legs, few possessions, and virtually no money. He offered to get her anything she wanted. “She looked at me and said, ‘You know, Papa, I have everything I need. Just promise me you are coming back.’ This touched me deeply and was a catalyst for me starting the foundation.”

The tour operators on this list understand this profound power of travel. Instead of helping travelers fill up pages in their passports, says Ashish Sanghrajka, president of Big Five Tours, “we’re about changing lives.” It’s also about creating global citizens. To that end, travelers can expect more experiences woven into itineraries, such as kneading dough with women at a community oven in Gabrovo, Bulgaria (see page 98), spending a few hours helping a foundation build a school in Mozambique (right), and sharing a meal with local leaders in the far north of Myanmar (see page 98).

Got questions? Find the answers in these pages.

Africa

CONGO, SÃO TOMÉ AND PRÍNCIPE

Gorillas and Birds

Rich in natural resources, the Republic of the Congo is banking on sustainable tourism to keep its vast swaths of forest—prime habitat for western lowland gorillas—from being exploited. Lodgings in the three-million-acre Odzala-Kokoua National Park are solar-powered tents on platforms nine feet off the ground to allow wildlife to roam. Keep your eyes peeled for forest elephants, elusive antelopes, and 13 primate species. The trip tops off with a jaunt to the Portuguese-speaking São Tomé and Príncipe for beach time, scuba diving, and a chance to look at rare birds, like the world’s smallest ibis. **Cox & Kings:** “*Primates & Birding*,” 12 days; \$11,235 (including internal airfare); www.coxandkingsusa.com **N**

MADAGASCAR

The Eighth Continent

Lemurs, found nowhere else in the wild, are the star attraction. But the 1,000-mile-long island off southeast Africa teems with Dr. Seussian flora and fauna—80 percent of its species are endemic, leading some to dub it the eighth continent—and is host to idyllic beaches and hospitable Madagascans. This itinerary guides you from Sakatia Island, where guests snorkel or take it *mora, mora* (slowly, slowly), to the markets of Antananarivo. You’ll scout for those irresistible primates in the forests of Andasibe National Park. **Mango Safaris:** “*Contrasts of Madagascar*,” 11 days; \$2,925 (lunches and several dinners not included); www.mangoafricansafaris.com **N V P**

MOROCCO

Cross-Country Ramble

From the world’s tallest minaret in Casablanca to the medieval medina of Marrakech, explore imperial cities and wild landscapes, including a three-day camel trek through the Sahara and a hike in the cedar forest of the Atlas Mountains. (Disclosure: The outfitter is part of the National Geographic family.) **National Geographic Adventures:** “*Morocco Camel Trek and Hiking Adventure*,” 13 days; \$4,495; www.nationalgeographicexpeditions.com

MOZAMBIQUE

Castaway Island

Live out Robinson Crusoe fantasies on a nameless, remote island: Kayak the coastline on the lookout for humpback whales, the manatee-like dugong, and

Visit our website for photos, links, and more.
Traveler.nationalgeographic.com/travel/tours

storks roosting in mangrove branches. Dinner is freshly caught fish cooked over an open fire. Afterward, you'll retire to a tent on the beach. Back on the mainland, explore unspoiled coral reefs from the Guludo Beach Lodge. The lodge is a primary supporter of the Nema Foundation, which works to protect the environment and relieve poverty in the country through projects such as building primary schools and providing daily meals for schoolchildren. **Extraordinary Journeys:** "Island and People of Mozambique," 10 days; \$4,000; www.ejafrika.com **N S P**

NAMIBIA Dynamic Dunes

Towering ochre dunes have long been this southern African country's calling card; this epic adventure brings you there—a trekking safari takes you through NamibRand Nature Reserve, where you'll sleep on "dune cots." In addition, track leopards and cheetahs with Africat Foundation researchers at Okonjima; scout rhinos in Etosha National Park's newly opened western reaches; hike amid the prehistoric rock art of Twyfelfontein, a World Heritage site; visit a remote Himba village; and kayak among seals and dolphins in Walvis Bay. **Wilderness Adventures:** "Namibia Expedition," 15 days; \$6,995; www.wildernesstravel.com **N**

ZAMBIA Animal Planet

The outfitter has paired three master safari guides with three wildly divergent ecosystems in a country where it's easy to see the Big Five—and there are fewer jeeps competing for a gander at them. These top trackers take you on walking safaris in the woodlands and along the rivers of South Luangwa National Park; on game drives in the plains and wetlands of Kafue National Park; and canoeing past elephants in Mana Pools National Park. **Wild Planet Adventures:** "Zambia Ultimate Wildlife Safari: An Ensemble of Master Guides," 18 days; \$13,998; www.wildplanetadventures.com **N**

BOTSWANA Plane and Simple

This classic Okavango Delta safari is the culmination of the 40-plus years of experience of founder Dave Herbert, who helped put Botswana on the radar of Americans a generation ago. Guests fly via bush plane to their choice of three vastly different luxurious tented camps, including two that specialize in wetland species, such as crocs and hippos, and land camps geared to viewing big game. **Great Safaris:** "The Great Wing Safari," 10 days; from \$4,350; www.greatsafaris.com

UGANDA Comeback Country

Uganda celebrates its 50th anniversary of independence from Britain this year and its return to stability after years of turbulence. The wildlife, decimated under the regime of brutal dictator Idi Amin, has recently made a dramatic comeback too; the country is now poised for an influx of tourism. This itinerary pioneers the vast potential for game-viewing, from Murchison Falls National Park, host to elephants, giraffes, hartebeests, lions, leopards, and hippos, to the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest and its resident gorillas. **Deeper Africa:** "Deeper Uganda," 13 days; from \$6,999; www.deeperafrica.com **P**

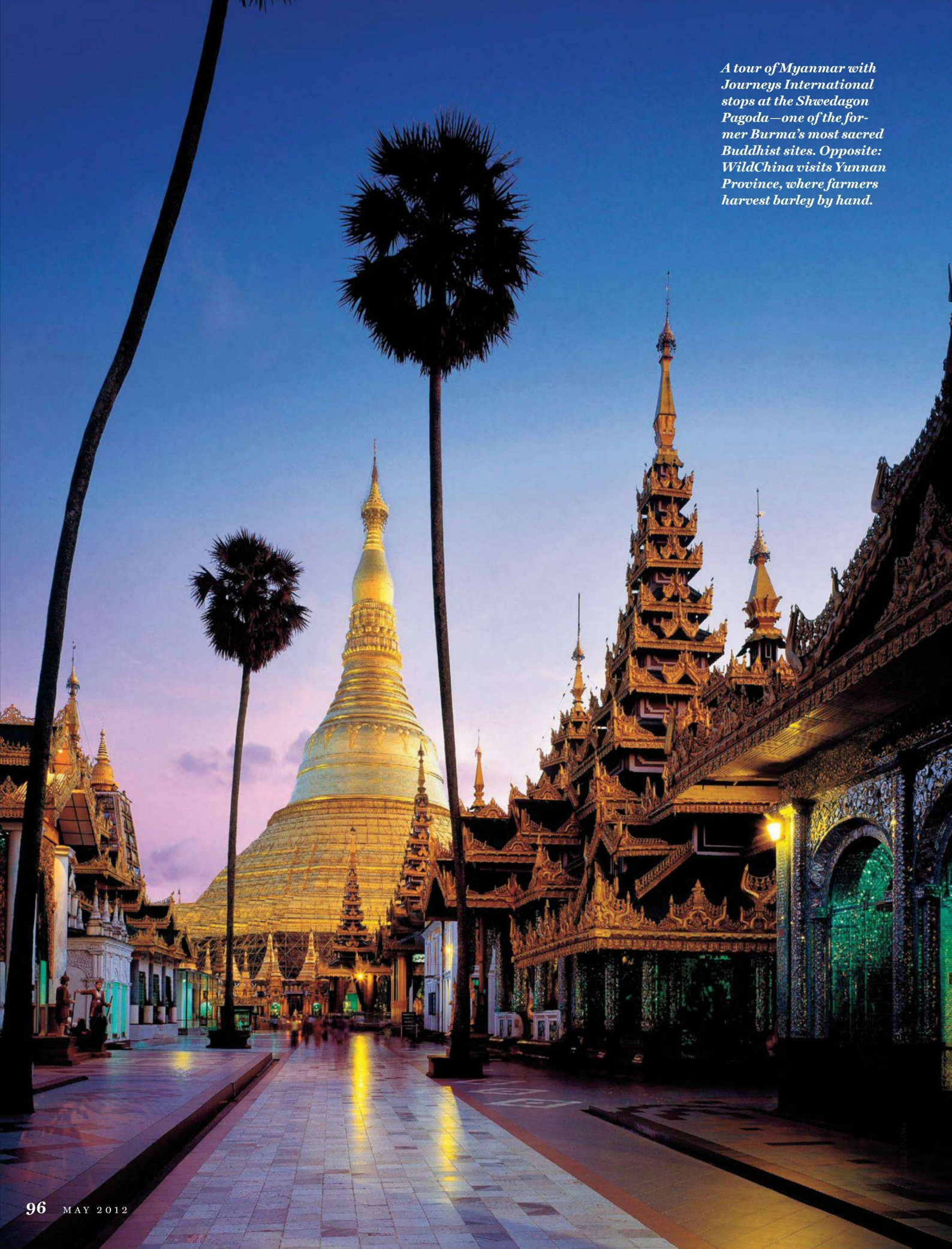
GHANA On the Radar

This West African country grabbed headlines in 2009 when President Obama and his family visited the capital, Accra, and the Cape Coast Castle, headquarters of the British slave trade in Africa in the 18th century. But its rich potential as a travel destination remains largely off the radar for most Americans, which is why veteran traveler Archana Shah and three friends decided to use an outfitter for their trip there. Aside from an "eye-opening" tour of the slave fortress, they tracked rare jungle elephants in Mole

Travel to Morocco, stopping in Marrakech (below), with National Geographic Adventures. Opening pages: Great Safaris offers a tour to Botswana, where visitors can see the sights up close; families can track leopards in South Africa with Beyond.



A tour of Myanmar with Journeys International stops at the Shwedagon Pagoda—one of the former Burma's most sacred Buddhist sites. Opposite: WildChina visits Yunnan Province, where farmers harvest barley by hand.



National Park. **Immersion Journeys:** “Ghana, Culture, Wildlife & Heritage,” 10 days; \$2,895; www.immersionjourneys.com **P**

SOUTH AFRICA

Pint-Size Safari

From learning how to do Shangaan beadwork at Kirkman’s Camp to being a Bushman for the day and studying the constellations of the southern sky in Bushmans Kloof Game Reserve, this is South Africa reimagined for kids. **&Beyond:** “Leopards, Winelands, and Rock Paintings,” 10 days; \$7,400; www.andBeyond.com **N F P**

TUNISIA

Springing Back

The birthplace of the Arab Spring was also the first to reopen for business after a peaceful election last fall. This wide-ranging trip shows off the country’s landscape and heritage, from the Roman coliseums and the theaters of Carthage to the Saharan oasis of Tozeur, with its hundreds of thousands of palm trees, to the seaside resort of Sousse. **Kensington Tours:** “Signature Tunisia,” 12 days; from \$3,920; www.kensingtontours.com **P**

Pacific Islands and Oceania

CHILE, FRENCH POLYNESIA, NEW ZEALAND

Island Hopping

Spanning thousands of miles, this journey immerses you in Polynesian cultures in three distinct regions: Easter Island, with its 800-some *moai* carved by the island’s Polynesian colonizers; Hiva Oa, to see tiki statues unearthed at Te Ipipona; and New Zealand’s North Island, for a hike in the world’s largest kauri forest with the descendants of Kupe, the island’s legendary Maori discoverer. **Ker and Downey:** “Path of the Polynesians,” 15 days; \$16,200; www.kerdowney.com **N**

NEW ZEALAND

Kiwi Romp

With a niche in “exotic learning adventures,” the outfitter’s typical trips help travelers develop a single skill—from ethnic cooking to surfing—in a foreign locale. But the wonderland that is New Zealand holds too much potential to focus on just one activity, so this dynamic tour lets participants develop mountain-biking, glacier-hiking, white-water-rafting, sea-kayaking, and even wine-tasting chops—all while traversing the country’s South Island. **Access Trips:** “New Zealand—Adventure Multi-Sport Tour,” 12 days; \$4,384; www.accesstrips.com

ON THE HORIZON

GABON

Blanketed in old-growth rain forest and teeming with wildlife, including forest elephants, mandrills, and surfing hippos, the country has vast potential for tourism. Josh Cohen of Wild Planet Adventures says he’s just waiting on cost-effective infrastructure that is safe and logistically viable. “Once it’s in place, Gabon’s outstanding resources could easily change the face of tourism in Africa.”

AUSTRALIA

Outback Eclipse

What better spot to view the longest total solar eclipse until 2016 than against the big sky of the outback? The trip departs on November 9. Get your bearings in Sydney before heading to Amaroo Tented Camp in the highlands of the northeastern coast of Queensland. Climb to Aboriginal rock art galleries, watch for crocs and other wildlife on the Barron River, and chat with a local astronomer ahead of the big event. **Elevate Destinations:** “Australian Outback Solar Eclipse,” 7 days; \$5,500; www.elevatedestinations.com **N**

Asia

IRAN

Behind the Headlines

Since GeoEx first dipped its toe in Iran 19 years ago, its tour business here has remained brisk despite the news stories coming out of Tehran. Returning clients regularly remark on “the warmth expressed by people on the streets,” says Jim Sano, the company’s president. This was the most popular Middle Eastern trip last year; it’s a carefully curated survey of the capital, Tehran; ancient Hamadan; the blue mosque and bazaar of Tabriz; the green gardens of Shiraz; and the elegant and ornate architecture of Esfahan. Guests are typically the only Westerners in Mashad, Iran’s most important Shiite pilgrimage site. **Geographic Expeditions:** “Treasures of Persia,” 21 days; \$8,075; www.geoex.com

CHINA

Tea Trek

Walk portions of the Tea Horse Road, a legendary trading route that once linked the tea-growing regions of Yunnan and Sichuan to the Tibetan Plateau, with Jeff Fuchs, the first Westerner to retrace the 3,100-mile trail. Sip teas at their origin in Xishuangbanna, participate in tea ceremonies, and stay at a tea plantation. **WildChina:** “The



*Ancient Tea & Horse Caravan Road: An Expedition With Jeff Fuchs,” 10 days; from \$3,745; www.wildchina.com **N***

CHINA, MYANMAR, THAILAND, LAOS, CAMBODIA, VIETNAM

Down the Mekong

From the mountain gorges of China’s Yunnan Province to the South China Sea, this month-long odyssey wends down the Mekong River through six countries on a series of boats. Woven into the itinerary are cultural forays off the river—sharing a traditional dinner with a Laotian family or attending a service at a Cao Dai temple in Vietnam, whose adherents worship Jesus, Confucius, and Buddha. **Journeys Within:** “Mekong Experience,” 29 days; \$7,499; www.journeys-within.com **V**

INDIA

Southern Loop

Well before it became a Silicon Valley of India, Hyderabad was once a global center of the diamond and pearl trade. Discover the city’s lavish bazaars and royal heritage on the first stop of this history-focused voyage throughout the country’s less traveled south. **Greaves India:** “Diamonds and Dynasties,” 14 days; \$3,090; tour.greavesindia.com **V P**

CHINA, NEPAL, TIBET

The World’s Rooftop by Bike

With rides up to 93 miles a day climaxing with big climbs at altitudes up to 16,000 feet, biking from Lhasa to Kathmandu isn’t for everybody. But hardy cyclists will be rewarded for their efforts with visits to

the remote Sera Monastery and palaces of the Dalai Lama, as well as stunning views of the Himalaya, including the North Face of Everest. **Exodus Travels:** “*Lhasa to Kathmandu Ride*,” 20 days; \$3,430 (plus \$270 bike rental); www.exodus.co.uk **V C**

ISRAEL, TURKEY, MOROCCO

Threads of the Diaspora

Part of the outfitter’s Inspired Expeditions Collections program (in which destination specialists are tapped to create their ultimate itinerary), this trip explores the deep Jewish roots and traditions of the Mediterranean. Guests visit a private home in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem’s Old City; tour Galata, a Jewish neighborhood in Istanbul; and enter the Museum of Moroccan Judaism in Casablanca. **Big Five Tours and Expeditions:** “*Foundations of Faith*,” 19 days; \$11,990; www.bigfive.com **N**

NEPAL

Off the Circuit

A twist on the traditional Annapurna Circuit trek, this route detours through the Nar and Phu valleys—only recently opened to commercial trekkers and thought to have one of the world’s highest concentrations of snow leopards. Here in the shadow of the Annapurna Range, you’ll explore ancient Buddhist monasteries and meet ethnically Tibetan villagers in remote communities at around 13,000 feet that have changed little in the past century. **One World Trekking:** “*The Lost Valleys of NarPhu Trek*,” 23 days; from \$2,905; www.oneworldtrekking.com **V**

THAILAND

Sailing off Samui

Ply the glassy, emerald waters of the Gulf of Thailand aboard a staffed 37-foot catamaran, dropping anchor for the occa-

Canyon of the Balkans; the emerald green Neretva; and the Vrbas, host of the 2009 World Rafting Championships—with cultural forays into Sarajevo, Banja Luka, and Mostar. **O.A.R.S.:** “*Bosnia: Three Rivers*,” 9 days; \$2,990; www.oars.com **N**

BULGARIA

Land of Dionysus and Orpheus

This trip digs into the cultural heritage of Bulgaria, from the era of the Thracians, who venerated Dionysus and originated the legend of the musician Orpheus, to the present day. Listen to a chamber concert at the ancient Serdica amphitheater in Sofia. Tour the tenth-century mountaintop Rila Monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Make *banitza*—phyllo filled with cheese—in the riverbank village of Gabrovo, and taste the fruit of thousands of years of winemaking. **Cultural Crossroads:** “*Cultural Splendors of Bulgaria: Art, Wine, and Traditions*,” 12 days; \$4,695; www.culturalcrossroads.com **N**

FRANCE

A Week in Provence

Kathy and Charley Wood were inspired to show off the Provence they got to know after their own six-month sabbatical here. You’ll have one base for this weeklong immersion: a guesthouse in the hilltop village of Bonnieux. Take lunch at the family-owned winery, Domaine Faverot, sample cheese at a goat farm near Saignon, and explore ancient caves that were once quarters of the Knights Templar, none of which are usually open to the public. **European Experiences:** “*Luberon Experience*,” 8 days; \$2,800; www.european-experiences.com

ICELAND

Family Romp

Icebergs the size of semis, simmering volcanoes, gray lava flats, and white ice fields: Tiny Iceland is jam-packed with topographic wonders ideal for family adventures. This one has you hiking, biking, horseback riding, rafting, and bird-watching through some of the island’s otherworldly land- and seascapes, including Skaftafell National Park and the Haukadalur Valley. **Backroads:** “*Iceland Family Multisport*,” 6 days; from \$4,358; www.backroads.com **N F**

ITALY

Tuscan Leisure Cruise

Inspired by Italy’s “slow food” movement, the notion of “slow paddling” draws on the participants’ natural abilities rather than kayaking dogma, which makes for a more relaxed exploration of Tuscany’s Elba Island by sea. But first, get your bearings on land at a family-owned inn in the Tuscan hill town of Impruneta, where you’ll cook from the garden;

ON THE HORIZON

LIBERIA AND SIERRA LEONE

Both countries have strong democratic governments for the first time. “They’re on our watch list because of their fascinating history in terms of both the slave trade and recent civil wars. They have some of Africa’s most remote cultures, with fascinating languages and religions,” says Jeff Russill of G Adventures.

MYANMAR

Remote Northern Trek

As one of Asia’s most isolated countries, Myanmar has long attracted a trickle of adventurous travelers, but that’s about to become more of a steady stream now that relations with Washington have warmed. Here’s a trek that takes you far from the popular sites of Mandalay and Pagan into the Lisu and Rawan hill country at the base of the easternmost Himalaya. Only in recent years opened to foreigners, this region is the gateway to the 19,295-foot Mount Hkakabo Razi and home to tribes descended from Tibetans. Overnights are in village-style guesthouses. **Journeys International:** “*Trek to the Last Village*,” 11 days; \$3,350; www.journeys.travel

ISRAEL

Holy Land Multi-Sport

The Holy Land is not just for praying. This privately guided tour lets you play: You can scuba dive, horseback ride, mountain bike, climb, and rappel on this family-friendly spin through Haifa, Galilee, Jerusalem, the Dead Sea, Eilat, and Tel Aviv. Note that lunches and dinners are not included in the price of this tour. **Horizon & Co:** “*Active Israel Adventure*,” 13 days; \$4,995; www.horizon-co.com **N P**

sional snorkel, swim, and explore, such as at Koh Ang Thong National Park for a hike among gibbons and the island of Koh Phangan, famous for its full-moon party. **G Adventures:** “*Thai Sailing Adventure—Koh Samui to Koh Samui*,” 7 days; \$1,599; gadventures.com **N V**

JAPAN

Land Before Time

Join archaeologist Simon Kaner on this exploration of archaeology through three of Japan’s four major islands, from the elaborate flame pottery of the Jomon period at the Niigata Prefectural Museum of History to the storied Osaka Castle. **Andante Travels:** “*Japan Fiery Ceramics and the Citadels of the Shogun*,” 18 days; \$7,237; www.barebonestours.co.uk

Europe

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Rafting Trifecta

Home to the rugged Dinaric Alps, one of the last primeval forests in Europe, and white water galore, Bosnia is heaven for adrenaline junkies. This adventure combines Class 2 to 4 runs on three rivers—the Tara, known as the Grand

Four Smart Questions to Ask Your Outfitter

1 How do your exploratory tours differ from a regular departure?

Much as a new restaurant invites friends and family to a soft opening, outfitters sometimes offer a dry run of an itinerary to repeat clients or those in the know to work out the inevitable kinks among a forgiving audience. The bonus is that you often get a chance to travel with the top guide or even the founder of the company. "They are great for people who have a spirit of adventure and know that there are sometimes surprises on inaugural trips," explains Kathy Stewart of Butterfield & Robinson. To make up for these surprises, an outfitter may offer a small discount.

2 What is your cancellation policy should the U.S. State Department issue a travel warning?

Last year's Arab Spring demonstrated just how quickly pockets of civil unrest can erupt into a potentially threatening situation. Find out at what point a burgeoning protest movement or other simmering tensions warrant a review of your travel plans and a possible refund. Great Safaris, for instance, lets clients traveling to Egypt make up their own minds: If they don't feel comfortable in the country, they have up to three days to receive a full refund and a plane ticket home.

3 In what ways do you differ from other operators offering similar itineraries?

Several companies may offer what seem like clone itineraries (indeed they sometimes are, if one company subcontracts for another). Some differences are obvious, like a home stay versus five-star digs, but others may not be so readily discernible. Quiz outfitters on their experience and services built into the price of the trip: How long have they been guiding trips in the region? Do they use subcontractors, or are they one? From what country do they draw most of their clients? Is medical evacuation insurance included? If the price is not quoted in U.S. dollars, how do they manage the risk of currency fluctuations, from the time of purchase to departure?

4 How flexible are your itineraries?

Ceding control of your schedule to a guide is part of the deal when you sign up for a small-group departure. Some outfitters are willing to accommodate occasional special requests if you simply must see something not in the plan. Beyond that, consider a private trip, where you'll have more say in your itinerary. But clarify upfront what may or may not be included, such as meals and tips, in the final cost. Outfitters have seen huge growth in this subset of travel. Jim Sano, president of Geographic Expeditions, where private tours now make up 60 percent of trips, says the shift is in response to the demands of baby boomers who have always preferred to do things on their own terms. (For private trips, look for the P designation.) —M.L.



In Poland, tour Warsaw's Castle Square, site of historical demonstrations and uprisings, with Exeter International.



*Jump into the water
in Idaho with ROW
Adventures as it cruises
the Middle Fork of
the Salmon. Opposite:
Hydrangeas line the
road on São Miguel
Island, a stop on a
Country Walkers tour
of the Azores.*

LAKE BAIKAL, RUSSIA

After years of petitioning, Geographic Expeditions got the nod to bring small groups to the northern reaches of Siberia's Lake Baikal, where some 60 percent of species are endemic, including the nerpa (freshwater seal). And with its nomadic tribes and shamanism, "it's amazing culturally," says president Jim Sano.

elsewhere, get tips on capturing the region's golden light in a photo workshop. **H2Outfitters:** "Slow Food, Slow Paddling: Sea Kayaking Italy's Tuscan Islands," 9 days; \$4,950; www.h2outfitters.com

POLAND

Culture Sampler

Wandering the museums and old towns of Warsaw and Krakow is like walking through the pages of a European history book. Tour the Gothic Wawel Cathedral, the coronation and burial site for Polish monarchs since the 14th century. See Bellotto's paintings of the capital at the Royal Castle, which were used as a reference to reconstruct the city after its destruction in World War II. Sample *nalweki*—herbal-infused vodka—at an artisanal distillery in the countryside, and learn the trick to making pierogi during a private lesson. **Exeter International:** "Treasures of Poland," 7 days; \$4,675; www.exeterinternational.com

PORTUGAL

Azores Walkabout

The maritime history of this Portuguese archipelago in the middle of the North Atlantic has long overshadowed the inland wonders of waterfalls, extinct volcanoes, elusive birds (like the Azorean bullfinch), and geysers and fumaroles. This trek through three of the nine volcanic islands does them justice. **Country Walkers:** "Portugal: The Azores," 7 days; \$3,998; www.countrywalkers.com

ROMANIA

Dracula's Backyard

This family-centric lap of Transylvania engages kids with geo-caching in the medieval city of Brasov, breadmaking with a local baker in the remote Saxon village of Viscari, and a visit to Dracula's castle. **KE Adventure Travel:** "Treasures of Transylvania," 8 days; \$1,475; www.keadventure.com **N V F**

RUSSIA

Space Odyssey

If you truly, madly, deeply wanted to be an astronaut, this special itinerary lets you play the part. It kicks off with a tour of Star City, the country's Cape Canaveral,



and an opportunity to participate in cosmonaut training (at extra cost). Next it's off to the Kazakh steppe to watch a launch and schmooze with luminaries of the space set. The trip culminates back in Moscow as you watch a live satellite feed at Mission Control of the *Soyuz* spacecraft docking with the International Space Station. **MIR Corporation:** "Inside the Russian Space Program," 10 days; \$13,995; www.mircorp.com **N**

FRANCE, ITALY, SWITZERLAND

Europe's White Mountain

With spectacular *Sound of Music* scenery, the camaraderie of fellow hikers, and the Alpine cultures of three different countries, this hiking circuit around western Europe's highest peak, Mont Blanc (15,770 feet), has become a classic. The outfitter's version includes stays in cozy auberges. **Boundless Journeys:** "Tour du Mont Blanc," 9 days; \$4,195; www.boundlessjourneys.com

North America

UNITED STATES

Rivers Wild

Carving through more than 100 miles of the largest federally designated wilderness area in the lower 48 states, the Middle Fork of the Salmon River, in Idaho, is prime family-rafting territory. Natural hot springs, pioneer homesteads, Indian rock art, hiking trails, and, of course, top-notch white water captivate kids and adults. The outfitter, known for a knack with children—a "river jester"—keeps them entertained—offers two special departures for families with kids

ages 8 and up. **ROW Adventures:** "Middle Fork Salmon Rafting," 6 days; from \$1,845; www.rowadventures.com **F**

MEXICO

The Real Deal

Chiapas has long been a neglected step-sister to the country's tourist hot spots of Acapulco, Cancún, and neighboring Oaxaca, but its beauty and charm are starting to get some buzz from travelers seeking *auténtico* Mexico. This trip shifts the focus to what you may have been missing, from the traditional backstrap weavers of San Lorenzo Zinacantan to the little-visited archaeological sites of Bonampak and Yaxchitlán and the ruins of Palenque, known for its stand-out examples of Maya architecture.

Journey Mexico: "Chiapas: A Journey Through Mexico Less Visited," 7 days; from \$2,090; www.journeymexico.com

UNITED STATES

Cycling the Blue and the Gray

Visiting Civil War battlefields needn't involve musty coach buses and dry accounts only a reenactor could appreciate. Here's a trip that commemorates the war's sesquicentennial with a bike ride from Leesburg, Va., to Gettysburg, Pa., taking in story-filled battlefield tours and landmark towns along the route. Bonuses: Blue Ridge mountain vistas and overnights at luxurious and historical inns, like the Red Fox in Middleburg, Va. **Wilderness Voyageurs Outfitters:** "9-Day Civil War Tour," 9 days; \$2,850; www.wilderness-voyageurs.com **N**

CUBA

Door Opening

One of a handful of operators to score permits from the Treasury Department to take U.S. residents to Cuba after the Obama administration eased travel restrictions to the nation last year, the company has teamed with Christopher Baker, an expert on Cuban culture and author of six books about the island, to craft an expedition built around visits with civic leaders, artists, and other locals. **Austin-Lehman Adventures:** "The Real Cuba," 9 days; \$4,498; www.austinlehman.com **N**

UNITED STATES

America's Great Game

You don't need a tour operator to show you Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks, but you'll want one to maximize your time spent in each with a mix of action—hikes, biking, horseback riding, and rafting—and animals, including grizzly bears, wolves, and bison. Groups max out at 24 people (more than we like on guided trips) but a higher guide-to-guest ratio than the industry standard and nights at the parks' historic lodges

IRAQ

"Places that are emerging from conflict are always of interest. We have an eye on Iraq, particularly the northern part," says Jonny Bealby of Wild Frontiers.

keep the feeling intimate. **Tauk:** "Yellowstone & the Tetons: American Safari," 8 days; \$3,990; www.tauk.com **N**

CANADA

Rockies Ramble

Backpack among the bighorn sheep, grizzlies, and nearly 10,000-foot peaks in the remote Willmore Wilderness in Canada's Alberta Province, the less crowded—but no less spectacular—neighbor to Jasper National Park. **Sierra Club Outings:** "Remote Canadian Rockies Ramble, Alberta and British Columbia," \$1,695; 12 days; www.sierraclub.org/outings **V**

UNITED STATES

Western Expedition

This small-ship expedition follows 19th-century explorers Lewis and Clark from Portland, Oreg., to Lewiston, Idaho, with a decidedly 21st-century emphasis on regional foodways and sustainable farming. Cruise east through the deep Columbia River Gorge, where you'll hike near Multnomah Falls to the Snake River for a jet boat ride over the rapids to Hell's Canyon. (Disclosure: The company is a partner to our parent organization, the National Geographic Society.) **Lindblad Expeditions:** "Columbia and Snake Rivers Journey: Harvests, History, and Landscapes," 7 days; from \$3,990; www.expeditions.com



CANADA

Teenage Dream in the Arctic

Smack in the center of a Venn diagram (where Arctic, subarctic, and boreal species roam and grow), the wetlands of Churchill, Manitoba, are an ideal laboratory for monitoring the effects of climate change. Here's a chance for science-minded teens to get in on the fieldwork, helping the pros count and maybe even trap and release fish, frogs, and tadpoles. **Earthwatch:** "Climate Change at the Arctic's Edge," 11 days; \$3,595; www.earthwatch.org

Central and South America

URUGUAY

Sip and Surf

Uruguay has edged up on many a bucket list in recent years as word gets out about its unspoiled beaches and wine country. This casual cycling excursion pairs the best of both worlds, starting from the back roads of Carmelo, where you'll sample the country's benchmark Tannat wines—an intense red varietal—to the chic beach town of José Ignacio and the village of El Garzón for a feast at the restaurant of renowned Argentine chef and grill master Francis Mallmann. **DuVine Adventures:** "Uruguay: Coast and Vineyards," 7 days; from \$4,195; www.duvine.com **P**

ARGENTINA

Canyon Country

With a reputation for revealing destinations through the eyes of locals (such as craftspeople, home cooks, and market vendors), the outfitter homes in on the northwest Argentine provinces of Salta and Jujuy, land of gaucho culture, sloping vineyards, verdant Andes foothills, and spectacularly striated canyons punctuated by towering cardón cactuses. **Culture Xplorers:** "Argentina True North," 10 days; \$3,590; www.cultureexplorers.com

BRAZIL

Paddling the Green Coast

Sheltered from open seas by Ilha Grande, or "big island," and fringed with sandy beaches and fishing villages, the

swath of coastal rain forest Brazilians call Costa Verde is a sea kayaker's dream. Launch from the colonial city of Paraty, a UNESCO World Heritage site, after joining the *festa* in Rio with a classic *churrascaria* (Brazilian barbecue) and more. **Tofino Expeditions:** "Sea Kayaking the Costa Verde," 10 days; \$4,190; www.tofino.com **N**

COSTA RICA

Quest for the Best

Based on an episode of the PBS series *Adventures With Purpose*, this limited-edition itinerary has you hitting the high notes in Costa Rica, from the cloud forest garden at Nectandra to the back creeks of Tortuguero National Park, with company founder Michael Kaye and adventure travel godfather Richard Bangs to discover the country's *pura vida*. **Costa Rica Expeditions:** "Quest for Pura Vida, Limited Edition," 8 days; \$9,900 www.questforpuravida.com **N**

PERU

Second Time Around

You've done Machu Picchu; now check out the archaeological treasures of northern Peru's Amazonas region, home to the Chachapoya, or Warriors of the Clouds, who built the massive complex of Kuélap around the ninth century—all at 9,800 feet above the Utcubamba Valley. **Adventure Associates:** "Journey to Chachapoyas," 5 days; \$1,989; www.adventure-associates.com **N P**

CHILE

Trail Fix

With its famous granite spires, jaw-dropping glaciers, and vivid alpine lakes, Patagonia's Torres del Paine National Park is a huge draw for hikers. But after years of use, the trails could use some love. Team up with park rangers to shore up the eroded sections while soaking up the spectacular setting. **REI Adventures:** "Torres del Paine Volunteer Vacation," 13 days; \$2,950; www.rei.com **V S**

COLOMBIA

Back on the Map

The country is back on itineraries again after the U.S. State Department acknowledged significant improvements in security last year. This three-week adventure takes you from Bogotá to Medellín to Cartagena, stopping at such spots as the underground salt cathedral at Zipaquirá, the coffee region of Armenia, and the northerly spine of the Andes in Los Nevados National Park. **Wild Frontiers:** "Colombia Explorer," 22 days; \$6,390; www.wildfrontiers.co.uk **N**

Contributing editor MARGARET LOFTUS resides in Charleston, South Carolina.

A Culture Xplorers trip through the northwestern provinces of Argentina includes the surreal salt flats of Salta and Jujuy. Opposite: Lindblad Expeditions gets you to Oregon's Multnomah Falls.





Cheat DEAT

DIANE COOK AND LEN JENSEL/GETTY IMAGES



Every time his doctors
tell him to stay put, he
heads out—because traveling
may be the only thing
keeping him alive

By EDWARD READICKER-HENDERSON

When I finally got back to the car, I telephoned Rach. “I’m still alive,” I said to my best friend. Which was a bit surprising; I hadn’t fully expected to survive the trip. Four months after getting out of a wheelchair, a couple of weeks after I’d ceased fainting when I did something ambitious, like stand up, I had decided to hike into the crater of Haleakala Volcano, on the island of Maui.

I’ve been traveling against all medical advice since 1990, when I collapsed down the stairs of a Japanese train station—and began my first conversations with medical professionals wearing serious expressions. Twenty-plus years later, I have a medical chart that comes with its own forklift. Details aren’t really important, and besides, everyone has something; mine just includes lots of surgeries and repeated suggestions about the importance of funeral planning.

“The hike took seven hours,” I told Rach, my hand a little shaky holding the phone. “Slipped and almost fell a few times. But there’s this plant down in the crater, like a yucca dipped in silver. And it’s so quiet there, you can’t tell if you’re hearing your heart beat or the sound of ocean waves moving up through all those miles of Earth.”

My friend was not having a good year. Fifteen months earlier—when doctors told me I probably didn’t need to plan for my next birthday—a different batch of doctors told my friend her husband wasn’t likely to last a lot longer than I.

So, from the rim of Haleakala, feeling considerably better than I had in a very long time, I did the only thing I could think of to help my friend. I told her the story I wished somebody had told me. The story that would have made my life—and the lives of the people who cared about me—easier.

The story about how every place I travel to comes down to how I’m going to live. Forget the bucket list. It’s the travel that, very literally, keeps me alive.

•

ALL OF AMERICAN SAMOA is pausing for *sa*, sacred time, when I carry my supper down to the beach in Pago Pago, the territory’s capital. Green turtles bob up, as if asking for a bite. And why not? Savor every sandwich, live each day as if it’s your last.

My problem with that idea, good as it seems at first glance, is that I long ago lost track of how many days were supposed to be my last. And do you even get a last day? Or just a last smile, a last touch? Science says the smallest meaningful measure of time is 10^{-43} of a second, and Buddhists will tell you the snap of a finger

A hiker on Maui’s Haleakala Volcano approaches a silversword, the plant that caught the author’s eye when he visited the crater.

holds at least 60 separate moments. Which one of those should I aim my life for?

Or, looking at the turtles, should I go for the other extreme measure of time, a *kalpa*? As illustration, picture a turtle that surfaces to breathe only once every thousand years. Next, picture a small wooden ring floating on the ocean. A *kalpa* is how long it will take for the turtle to surface with its head through the ring.

Kalpa is closer to the understanding of time that I got from a hero of mine, Francis Cowan, whom I met once on Moorea. In 1956, Cowan and a friend built a boat and, using traditional Polynesian navigational techniques of observing stars and wave patterns, sailed toward Chile. Took “200 days exactly,” he said, as his puppy barked either at me or at the waves that splashed dragon’s-eye blue. Over those 200 days, the two adventurers never knew for sure what they were sailing into. But it was okay. Because when you feel lost, Cowan told me, when all reference points have disappeared, “the ocean is great, and you can wait for another day.”

That is the first way travel keeps me alive. Because the world is great and incredibly generous with time.

I can’t worry about my days being numbered when I know I’ve already lived forever over a lingering breakfast in Venice with the woman who keeps my heart beating as I stare at her, framed by a view of gondolas bobbing in the Grand Canal and sextons rattling keys in front of the gray dome of the Church of Santa Maria della Salute.

When I saw him, Cowan was more than 80 years old and not healthy, yet he was working on a new canoe.

As the poet Frank O’Hara said, “We fight for what we love, not are.”

Which is the second way travel keeps me alive. I am, my doctors tell me, what my friend’s husband has decided he is: somebody who probably should stay home. And I’ve had times when I’ve done that. At home, I have my books and my comfy chair, and in my yard is a lake where bald eagles cast their shadows, where bats pull twilight down with each flap of their wings. Not a bad place to be, even if all I’m doing is popping pain pills like Pez and watching lousy movies and gasping for breath. Even if all I’m doing is waiting for the days to go away, saying “No, not again” to every sunrise.

Saying no is the easiest thing in the world. But who loves no? If you’re going to fight for what you love, don’t you have to say yes?

Which is what got me into that volcano when I could barely walk. Which is what got me on that plane to Pago Pago.

In Pago, I say yes to a smaller plane to a smaller island, yes to people who offer me a ride to that island’s far side, yes to the captain who then takes me across the sea in a boat with an engine barely powerful enough for a model car, yes to the dot of jungle we reach, where the flowers are bigger than Frisbees and fairy terns swirl the air like smoke rings.

Say no, and all you’re doing is waiting for time to finish. Say yes, yes, and it’s the spell that opens Ali Baba’s cave. The riches never run out.

Although exactly what those riches are has rather changed for me over the years. In my 20s, I trekked the Himalaya and watched prayer flags flutter in the heat from a single candle. In my 30s, I camped in the Arctic and ate squirrels we’d trapped, because the elders I was with were getting sick from store-bought meat. In recent years, my cane has traveled more miles than my hiking boots. Which can be really frustrating. If I were healthy, where couldn’t I go? Do a Buddhist *kora*—pilgrimage—around Tibet’s revered Mount Kailash. Ride camels across the desert. Even in my shape, why can’t I still trek the elf-haunted backcountry of Iceland—besides the fact

Every place I travel to comes down bucket list. It’s the travel that,



A swimmer explores coral reefs in American Samoa. “Traveling,” the author says, “teaches us to dare.”

RANDY OLSON/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC STOCK

that I'd probably keel over from a heart attack if I did, and elves are not known for their paramedic skills? Still ...

Which is exactly when I run into the fact that Daz, my travel companion of choice, is a beautiful, highly trained psychologist and Buddhist meditator. "You're thinking that how things used to be is normal," she says. "But they're just how things used to be. What does that have to do with now?" Impossible to argue with. The late jazz guitarist Django Reinhardt reinvented his technique when two burned fingers gave him no other choice, while Claude Monet depicted flowers in a way no one had before when he had to peer at them through cataracts. I may suck at playing musical instruments, and I can't paint even a crooked line well, but I can travel. By doing so, I meet the world on its terms, which teaches

me how to be honest with what the day is, instead of what I think it should be. And by doing so I find the best way to make *now* work no matter what then used to be.

This, then, is reason three: I learn it's not a matter of better or worse, but simply this or that.

Imagine your house is on fire, somebody said to the artist Jean Cocteau. What's the one thing you'd take out?

The fire, Cocteau said.

Every time I board a plane, I'm taking out the fire, all that noise of daily life, and keeping only what's necessary: hope, amazement, love. When I'm home, I want to be that person who travels, the one who smiles at a stranger rather than retreats into a very familiar shell of distraction and pain and "No." He's a much, much better version of

me than the one who picks up the pain pills and TV remote at the same time, the one who wouldn't leave the house for days if the dog didn't need to be walked.

Which means that, to make the travel possible, I do all of the things my doctors wish I'd do because they tell me to—though, frankly, their advice doesn't have nearly the same pull as, say, the possibility of swimming above a Samoan reef, its coral like fireworks. Where I'll float and look until I have the entire seascape memorized, from the octopus turning invisible in the sands to the way fish the size of birthday candles dart and pause, dart and pause. As if, like me, they don't want to risk missing anything.

Because how many genuinely undistracted moments do we really manage as adults? I mean the kind of complete being that, except in odd instances like floating over a coral reef, we left behind upon forsaking childhood, when we'd ride our rocking horse, needing no world farther away than where the front hooves reached.

The fourth way that travel keeps me alive takes me back to Japan. When I lived there—and before that whole train station pratfall—my friend Atsuko would perform the tea ceremony at the Daitoku Temple in Kyoto every summer. The temple's worship halls were huge and lovely and held the scent of 700 years of prayers and candles.

I would sit enraptured as Atsuko, her kimono folded round her like brightly curved origami, worked through the most drawn-out way to make a simple cup of tea: turning the cup just so, taking the split bamboo whisk and churning the *matcha* into a froth. Full attention to every single breath and motion, as if she were on her rocking horse again.

When, at last, the tea ceremony ended, I'd bow to Atsuko and leave along dark boards polished by generations of shuffling monks. Just outside the tearoom was a small Zen rock garden known as Totekiko. In it were five rocks set in gravel. Around three of the rocks, the gravel was raked in a circle, like water reacting to dropped pebbles. Totekiko offered no single point where I could see everything at once. I had to move around to get it all in—an

CONTINUED ON PAGE 122

to how I'm going to live. Forget the very literally, keeps me alive.



JERUSALEM by the BOO

Toting a travel guide his parents wrote in the 1950s, a son revisits the city he knew well as a child—and discovers a new one along the way

BY
MICHAEL ROSENFELD
PHOTOGRAPHS BY
ALEXANDRA AVAKIAN

THEM K



Women pray at the Western (Wailing) Wall, in Old Jerusalem's Jewish Quarter. A holy site for Jews, the wall originally supported a temple complex commissioned by King Herod in 20 B.C.

It's nine o'clock on a Sunday night in May, and the hills of West Jerusalem are ablaze. "Can you take me to the biggest fire?" I ask the taxi driver. Soon we're skirting the Valley of the Cross and nosing our way through a throng of Orthodox Jewish men in black coats and fur hats. They are dancing around a bonfire that must be ten feet high. Safe behind wooden barricades, women and children look on, their modest dress no mask for their excitement. ¶ All are celebrating Lag b'Omer, a festival that commemorates a first-century sage. For days children have collected wood and placed

it in piles around the city. I did this too, as a child growing up here. I see two boys pulling roasted potatoes from the fire and feel a rush of recognition.

It's been more than 30 years since I lived in Jerusalem, and the ancient city is no longer as familiar. To find my way, I've designed an experiment in time travel: To the extent possible, I'll rely on a battered blue volume called *Ticket to Israel*, which my parents wrote 60 years ago. Full of vivid stories and arcane advice, it was likely the first guide to the new state of Israel. I'm eager to see how far it can take me in a place that has changed so much—and

to find remnants of this place that so captivated my parents, who must have felt the tug of something deep when they wrote of "this silvered city ... this dream etched in stone."

The guidebook sat for years on my basement bookshelf, a neglected chronicle of my parents' early history. Young reporters, they met and married while working at the *New York Post*, which sent them to Palestine in 1947. They covered the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and, excited by the history unfolding around them, decided to stay.

On my first day, I set out from my hotel, the sky a cloudless Jerusalem blue that presages a clear, dry heat. The walls of the Old City loom in the distance. My fellow visitors have human guides, or at least new guidebooks. I'm toting a book from another world, one written in the somewhat breathless tones of two journalists who lived

through a profound struggle and just have to tell you about it. It's full of time-bound tips, some quite hilarious. For example: "*Packing list for The Gentlemen: Two seersucker suits, one rayon-nylon cord, one dark tropical worsted. Two pairs of knee-length British-officer-style khaki gabardine shorts, plus two pairs of high wool socks. Underwear: Take nylon for easy washing.*"

With that timeless advice under my arm, I head down Hebron Road toward what is known as the Seam, the strip of land between the walled Old City and the rambling New. Already I feel that sense of dislocation common to time travelers. In 1951, when my parents





Pedestrians walk along Zion Square, a crossroad of cultures—Christian, Muslim, Jewish—in West Jerusalem. Opposite: The Old City walls overlook Jerusalem's historic core.



wrote their book, this was no-man's-land. You could get shot by a sniper perched on the Old City walls just for walking here.

I'M ON MY WAY TO THE HEART of New Jerusalem, founded some 150 years ago—a blink of an eye in a place that measures time in millennia. My destination is Zion Square, where I hung out as a teenager, drawn to the theaters with their B-movie Westerns. I pass the King David Hotel, which has sheltered the powerful and the famous. It is as elegant as the Plaza in Manhattan, and as pricey—\$420 a night when I checked online. I should have come in 1951, when it was \$10.72.

It was a different world then, one still recovering from war. Some 30,000 Arabs had fled their homes in Jerusalem's New City, which had been taken over by the victorious Israelis. Thousands of Jews from North Africa and the Middle East came here, giving the city a distinctively Eastern cast.

It is in the whisper of petticoats which accompanies the dark-skinned women who walk through the streets with dignity. It is in the rolling accents of the children who play "Jews and Arabs" in the back alleys ... It is in the stance of the ragged, turbaned porters who lounge on the corners of Jerusalem's main square, Zion Circus.

Turbaned porters? There's no sign of them in today's Zion Square. Instead, I see a catalog of local archetypes: Jerusalemites in jeans, well-dressed older women, housewives with plaid shopping carts, Orthodox men in black, young soldiers with automatic weapons. When the sleek light-rail tram whisks by, any lingering illusion of the past goes with it.

So where is the Jerusalem my parents wrote about years ago, this dream etched in stone? This city of pilgrims and dreamers who traveled thousands of miles to reach it?

The road to Jerusalem; I remember it so vividly from my childhood. A two-hour-long journey of pure magic. From the flat plain by the sea, it climbs and curves its way around the Jerusalem hills.

When I was eight, I would sit in the backseat of our old Vauxhall, feeling the vibrations as we rounded the terrifying hairpin turns known as the Seven Sisters. Along the way were burned-out wrecks, reminders of the battles waged to control this road in 1948.

Today, the road to Jerusalem is a modern highway. For someone long absent, it is the shock of the new, rendered in asphalt. Does the old road still exist? Opening my parents' *Ticket to Israel*, I find the chapter "Via Dei, the Road to Jerusalem."

Today's road is paved, but it is not skid-proof, glare-proof or bump-proof. It does not even stick to the rule about a straight line and two points. But, to Israel, it represents a triumph of the spirit and, for good and sufficient reason, it is called K'vish Hag'vurah—the Road of Courage ... Always a highway to glory, the way to Jerusalem has sometimes been a highway of death.

Knowing my limits, I hire an English-speaking guide, Susan Lamdan, who is instantly intrigued by my quixotic search. We leave

Jerusalem on the four-lane highway. Barely 15 minutes outside the city we turn onto a narrow stretch of the old road and quickly spot the first thing my parents would recognize. It is a British army fort, one of many built while England controlled Palestine under a United Nations mandate. They were known as Tegar fort, after the British officer who designed them. The British knew how important it was to control this road to Jerusalem, the only supply route to the Holy City.

Lamdan parks on the side of the road and we cross. The concrete structure hasn't given way to time—save for the scrappy trees pushing up in the courtyard. In one room, barbed wire curls on the floor. A man at the nearby bus stop tells us that the Israeli defense forces use this place for nighttime training.

We continue on to another Tegar fort. This one is now the Armored Corps Museum, billing itself as the "most varied armor collection in the world." Maya, a young Israeli soldier dressed in



So where is the Jerusalem my parents wrote about years ago, this dream etched in stone, this city of pilgrims?

a uniform and sandals, shows us one of the 13 tanks that were owned by the Israelis in the late 1940s. As we prepare to leave the site, we spot

several Israeli soldiers clambering aboard a more modern tank.

An hour or so later we make an abrupt turn onto a dirt track. Lamdan seems a little nervous; our rental car does not have four-wheel drive. But she knows how badly I want to travel the old "Burma Road." All but forgotten now, it was carved from the hills in secrecy, part of a desperate attempt to resupply Jerusalem as the war raged on.

Quietly, Jewish engineers charted an alternate route over granite-speckled foothills almost within sight of Latrun's patrols and, by night, middle-aged men—some of them soft-handed lawyers and bespectacled professors—chipped a new road out of the rocks ... Nicknamed the Burma Road after another crude life line, it was put into use even before completion; jeeps brought food and arms as far as the dirt road went and husky dockworkers, summoned hurriedly from the ports of Haifa and Tel Aviv, carried cargo on their backs across the terrain ... The siege was broken.

The rich juice of pomegranates (above), a fruit mentioned in the Bible, offers Via Dolorosa passersby a healthful refreshment. Opposite: Signs mark the conservative Mea Shearim neighborhood (top), nexus of Jerusalem's ultra-Orthodox Jewish population. A mix of locals, tourists, and Israeli security forces (bottom) fills the Muslim Quarter, largest of Old Jerusalem's four quarters.



*Coffee and biscuits
await takers at the
American Colony Hotel.
Opposite:
Hasidic students
from the U.S. visit
the conservative
Jewish enclave
of Mea Shearim.*



Today the old road is a track better suited to walking. We bump along in silence between rows of burgeoning thistles. Pigeons rise from the fields, then an elegant crane, the only living things apparent on this abandoned lifeline to the Holy City.

A fine way to see Jerusalem is through its synagogues... Only a guide versed in the customs of [the city's] Jews can make synagogue-crawling (as it is known among locals) as rewarding as it should be.

I find such a guide, a self-taught historian named Rafi Kfir. We arrange to meet on the fringes of Mea Shearim, Jerusalem's most renowned religious neighborhood, at 7 a.m. Because it is the Sabbath, Kfir has walked half an hour instead of driving.

"I am Orthodox," he tells me, "but not ultra-Orthodox." It is a distinction that spells a world of difference. The Orthodox obey Jewish laws but do not isolate themselves. The ultra-Orthodox live in closed communities, keeping the secular world at bay.

We cross a barricade and, suddenly, we are in the midst of men with beards and side curls. Some wear the round fur hats, or *shtreimels*, that mark them as members of a particular group. I am of course carrying my parents' blue guide. It occurs to me that it must look like a prayer book to the men we pass.

At the bottom of the hill we come to an intersection. Kfir, who grew up here, tells me this was the front line of skirmishes between religious and secular Jews that began in the 1950s and peaked in the 1990s.

"Shabbat Square was a place where there was fighting between Orthodox people and the ordinary people who wanted to drive on Shabbat. A lot of stones, a lot of blood, a lot of policemen."

These days, Mea Shearim and several adjacent neighborhoods are closed off on Saturday. Visitors are usually tolerated but only if they are dressed with extreme modesty: long sleeves, covered legs, and head scarves for married women.

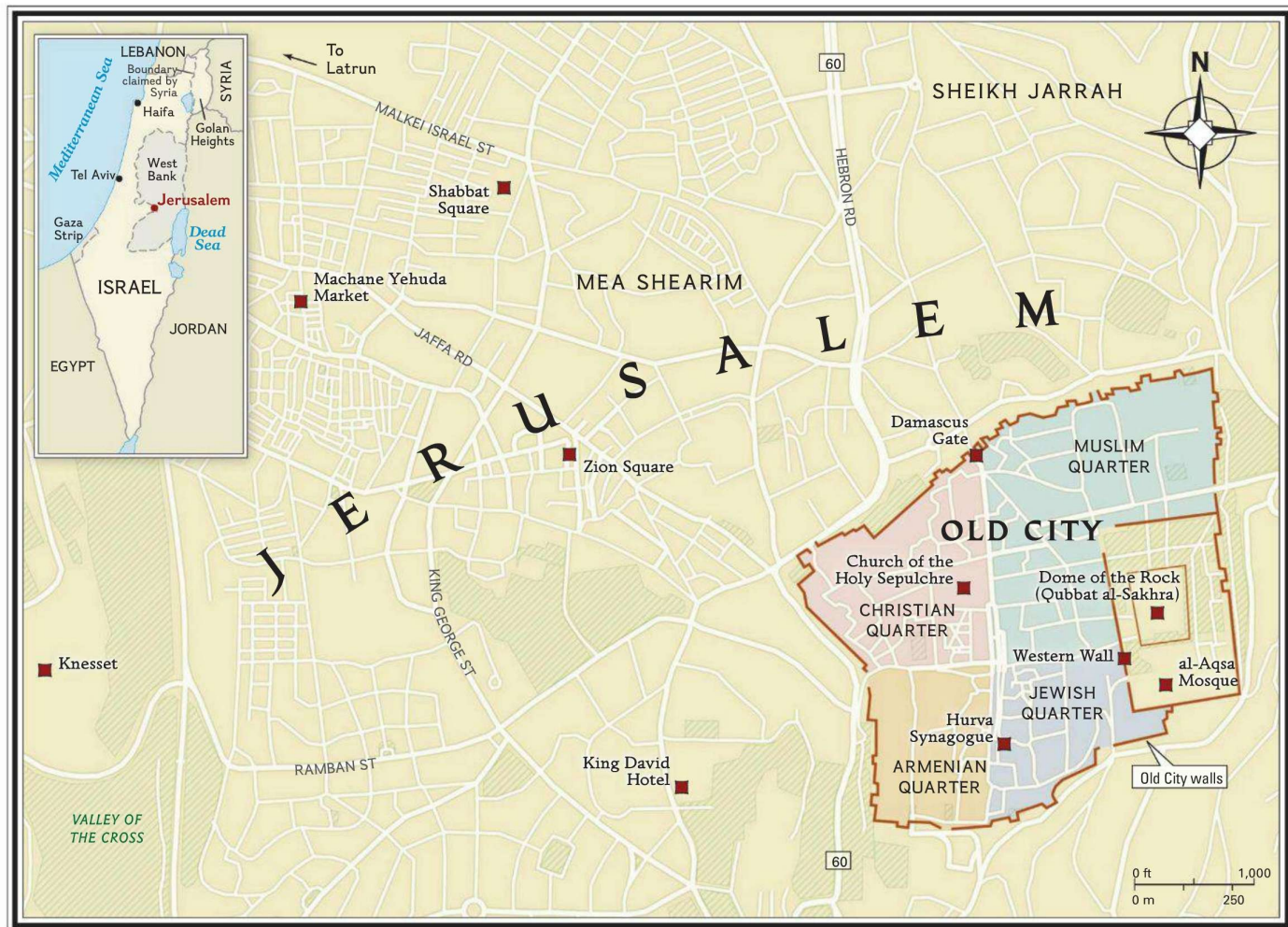
Kfir takes me into a narrow courtyard, the heart of the old Yemenite neighborhood. We pass two men hurrying to pray. Kfir asks them to direct us to the most authentic Yemenite synagogue. They debate briefly, then agree it is the one just there, up a narrow flight of stairs. We enter a small room where some 20 men are praying. They sit at small desks, their books open before them. I am given a prayer shawl and sit quietly by the door. I notice the faces—of learning and character. Most, though not all, are the dark faces of Israel's Yemenite Jews.

In the Yemenite synagogue, shoeless worshipers sit cross-legged on the floor and patriarchal old men share prayer books with small children.

No one is barefoot here, and the men wear distinctively embroidered Yemenite hats. Their chanting is exotic to me. The vowels sound foreign, and the singing seems less unified than what I'm used to, as if each man is in his own private sphere.

In the years since my parents were here, Jerusalem has become a more religious city. The Orthodox community, much larger now, has dispersed to many neighborhoods. Religious and nonreligious Jews may meet in the public square, but they often seem uneasy in each other's presence. It is one of the fault lines that runs through the bedrock of this holy city.

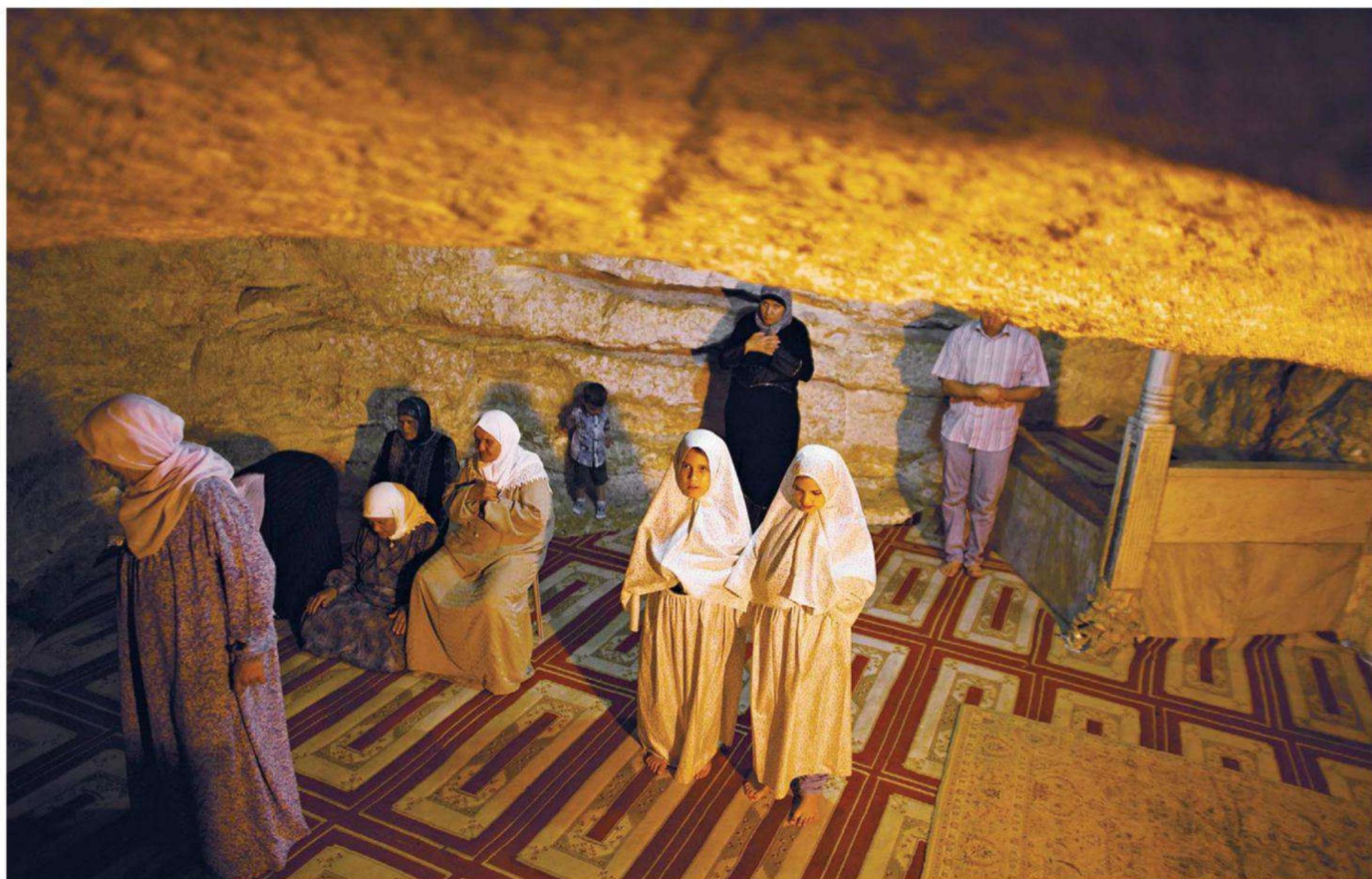
Many fault lines converge in the Old City. Surrounded by 16th-century limestone walls, it reflects the sun in a blaze of white as





Members of the Christian Ethiopian Coptic community (above) gather for a festival on the roof of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The church receives pilgrims (below) who come to kiss the stone on which it is believed the body of Christ lay after the Crucifixion.





I get off the bus at the Damascus Gate. Coming down the steps and through the gate, I am swimming upstream through a tide of thousands pouring out of the Old City. Of course! It's Friday, the Muslim holy day. Noonday prayers at al-Aqsa Mosque have ended, and now they are streaming home for lunch.

I climb steadily past sellers of bread, souvenirs, and an astonishing array of candy. As I near the end of the Muslim Quarter, I spot a sign: "The Center of the Old Romanian City." I step through the door and into a spacious café. The owner serves me coffee, then stands in the center of the room, his arms outstretched. "Where I am standing is the center of the Old Roman city," he explains. "Not Romanian, Roman. We made a mistake on the sign."

We are on the border of the Jewish and Muslim Quarters, he tells me. "I am the UN for both of them." It is an exaggeration, of course, but I notice some Jewish Israelis having coffee in this Arab shop. As it so often does here, the conversation turns to the situation. "Why you don't tell your people the truth?" the shop owner asks. "Why I am not free? I am under occupation more than 42 years."

And there it is, a major fault line. This one stems from 1967, when Israeli forces captured the Old City in the Six Day War. Outwardly calm most of the time, the city still simmers with tension between Jews and Arabs.

A few more steps, and I cross over to the Jewish Quarter. My parents didn't write about it in the book—in 1951, no Jew would have been able to come here—but they were here in the tense days before the 1948 war. Would my mother recognize these lanes? I doubt it. Since the Israelis took the city in 1967, they have been widening streets and even rebuilding one of Jerusalem's oldest synagogues, the Hurva. Through its wide plaza pass hundreds of Jewish tourists in head scarves and yarmulkes. As they hurry toward the Western (Wailing) Wall they pass shops, cafés, and restaurants.

The English, as everyone knows, are just about the world's worst cooks. Yet, an English correspondent who recently visited Israel returned home to London to write in horror that the Israelis live on a diet of "carp entrails and old tomato skins." He was not talking about rationing, either; he was talking about what Israeli cooks do to good, crisp, nourishing food.

To get a fix on 21st-century Israeli food, I head to the Machane Yehuda market, where Jerusalemites stock up, especially before the Sabbath. With me is an expert on the local food scene, cookbook author Judy Goldman, who gives culinary tours of Israel.

"Ten years ago, the idea of a culinary tour in Israel was a laugh," she says. "Now you can easily do a ten-day itinerary."

The Machane Yehuda market was once a chaotic warren of stalls. I remember it as dank and redolent of fish, a place I would resist being dragged to by my parents. My impression now could not be more different. Machane Yehuda is a sparkling food emporium, full of light, crowded with shoppers, and brimming with fresh produce. There are even coffee shops with good espresso. We pass a halvah stand, specializing in the sweet and nutty sesame confection Israelis love. There was one variety when I was a kid, but the King of Halvah offers some 30 types, including coffee, chocolate, and two kinds of pistachio. I leave with more than is good for me.

What's behind the Israeli food craze? It's a mix of factors: a growing middle class, television, Israeli wanderlust. "Israelis are inveterate travelers," Goldman says. "The minute you're out of the

Muslim pilgrims (top) pray in a chamber under the sacred rock in the Dome of the Rock shrine. Muslims believe their Prophet ascended from this rock to heaven. Patrons find market-fresh fare at Café Mizrachí (bottom) in the Machane Yehuda market.

army, off you go. And a lot of young Israeli chefs have gone abroad to apprentice."

Everything is seasonal here, she adds, and Israelis spurn food whose time has not yet come. "Tomatoes are the exception. If tomatoes are not available, Israelis go crazy. Popular in restaurants now is a five-tomato salad."

The next morning, just after 8 a.m., the phone rings. It is Judy Blanc, a family friend who knew my parents in their Jerusalem days.

"What are you doing this afternoon?" she wants to know.

I was planning to go to the newly renovated Israel Museum, which everyone says is phenomenal.

"You can do that tomorrow," Blanc tells me. "Today you should see some flash points."

At 2 p.m. I'm in Blanc's old car, skirting the Old City walls toward the Damascus Gate. Barely four blocks later we pull into the dusty Palestinian neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah. The tension is obvious the minute we step out of the car. Three Palestinian women are sitting in the shade of a tree. They've just been displaced from their home by a small group of Jews, who claimed title to what

had been Jewish houses before 1948. Then two women, both Orthodox Jews, emerge from the contested house and unlock their cars. Under her breath, but loudly enough to be heard, one

of the Palestinian women mutters her strong disapproval.

Blanc tells me that Palestinians and their Jewish supporters demonstrate here every Friday afternoon, intent on stopping the displacement of Arab families, which they see as part of a plan to Judaize the Old City. This, too, is Jerusalem, I think: still living through its age-old conflicts, still struggling to find an elusive peace.

Friday night is the family's night... Rations are carefully conserved for this Sabbath meal, and it draws together the most disparate of parents and youngsters, if only for an hour.

This Friday night the parents and youngsters are gathering at the house of my old friend Sara. It was at her kitchen table that a tutor hired by our parents taught us to read and write in English. I remembered her walled garden as a magical place. Tonight, a trio of jazz musicians is playing. We sit on chairs on the grass, eating zucchini stuffed with rice and sipping lemonade that tastes slightly of fennel. The loquat tree is heavy with small orange fruits, which people eat from a bowl that is passed around. As the sun goes down, Sara's husband says the Sabbath blessings. The meal lasts late into the night. The only sounds we hear are our own voices and the occasional singing from a nearby synagogue.

The city is at peace and its eternal tensions seem remote. A passage in my parents' blue guidebook comes back to me.

Whose city is this? To which towering shade does it belong? Who among the millions whose blood stained these ancient hills holds eternal lien on Jerusalem?

In the peace of this evening, it is possible to believe that Jerusalem's fault lines could remain submerged in bedrock. But I know they are there, waiting to have their inexorable impact, as they were in my parents' day. *Ticket to Israel* is as dated as a guidebook can be, and also as up to date. It is wrong on a thousand details, and clueless about where to eat. But there is something in its pages that still resonates with anyone who marvels at the holy city's golden light. One line remains as accurate as the day my parents typed it. Jerusalem, they wrote, is "like no city that is or ever was."

This is filmmaker MICHAEL ROSENFELD's first Traveler story. ALEXANDRA AVAKIAN last photographed "Egypt's New Day" (September 2011).

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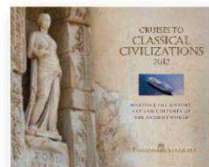


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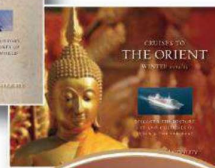
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CHEATING DEATH

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 107

illustration of the fourth reason I leave home: So often travel confers the gift of a perfect day in a perfect place solely because we moved a little to the side. Depart crowded Venice for the quiet hill town of Asolo, where the hills trill birdsong like a music box. Share sunscreen with a stranger by the Dead Sea and make a friend for life.

Descend into a volcano and realize that I've missed the most obvious point of all.

"So here is what I want you to know," I say to Rach. After 20 years of hearing doctors say that I'm about to drop dead, this is the one thing I really want her husband to grasp. Because it took me a stupidly long amount of time to figure out for myself.

I was on my way to Inuvik, a town on the northwest edge of Canada's remote Northwest Territories. Like everyone who drives the Dempster Highway, I pulled my truck over at the big sign that announced the Arctic Circle, an arc of wood reading "LAT 66° 33'N."

I lined myself up with the sign and walked into the autumn tundra. Willows smaller than pencils hugged the ground for warmth, spreading around reindeer lichen, saxifrage, and Arctic blueberries as sweet as my mom's cure-all kiss when I was a kid staying home sick from school. I walked until I found a little patch of flowers. Picked two, pressed them in my notebook. Pieces of the world.

A couple of weeks later, visiting Rach in Arizona, I fanned back the pages to offer her this moment when I was far away, yet thinking of her. And somehow, in the dark, closed notebook, those Arctic flowers had gone to seed like dandelions. As I brought them out, the fluff blew across the Arizona desert, looking for a new home—that incredible optimism of life that it can adapt and thrive in more places, in more ways, than we ever usually bother to realize. Even when it's our own lives. Maybe especially when it's our own lives.

My friend laughed at her disappearing flowers, confirming to me

that the only reason to go anywhere, do anything, bother being alive at all, is to bring pleasure to those who are dear.

Which is exactly why I've been so mad at her husband. Write that bucket list, live as if it's your last day, and what you're really doing is concentrating on yourself—the easiest, most logical thing to do when you're seriously sick.

And oh, I did that. I'm pretty sure that every sentence I uttered in the late 1990s—the time between surgeries three and four—was subject-verb-profanity. How I made the people who loved me suffer because I was lost in my anger. My days were numbered, dammit... never bothering to think it was *our* days.

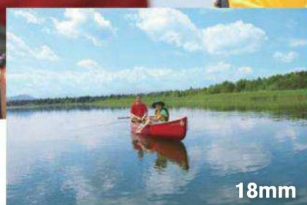
All I really did was waste an incredible amount of time and energy paying attention to how crappy I felt when I should have been noticing how wonderful it is, after startling awake in the night, to be soothed back to sleep by someone who is snoring peacefully as a lullaby.

Looking out from the tiny island of Ofu, the tag end of American Samoa, into the ocean where Apollo astronauts splashed down after a trip into the spheres of heaven, I realize maybe the truest thing I've ever written is "Whoever created the world went to a lot of trouble. It would be downright rude not to go out and see as much of it as possible."

In my case, sometimes what's possible is making it to my porch, where I can spot a kingfisher or a great blue heron, or maybe even a dragonfly with zebra stripes. And sometimes what's possible is standing on a remote atoll in the Marshall Islands, the land so thin that when a storm hits, I can hear the different sounds of lagoon waves and waves in the wide ocean. I will even eat a little *bwiro*—fermented breadfruit—in the morning, which is not a bad thing as long as the people I'm hanging out with have stories to share.



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Isn't it wonderful to know, beyond any doubt and with infinite, unearned grace, that the world holds so much, that what we take most for granted in our lives—even the very shape of the land beneath us or the sky above—can change according to how we're willing to see it, to greet it?

"And that," I tell Rach from the volcano's edge, "is what I learned playing peekaboo with you." Back after surgery number six, after I'd acquired a whole new batch of doctors who had a whole new reason to announce my days were numbered, she'd come to visit me in the hospital. I was so drugged that I only managed to open my eyes for a peek to see her and be happy. A minute later, I woke again, saw her again, and was just as happy. And a third time. Like waking up to a boundless horizon over and over—the joy of peekaboo, of opening your eyes and seeing absolutely everything you need.

Now, telling her this, that under the fine face of heaven only one thing remains truly important, I realize that there is a second conversation I need to have, with an incredibly beautiful woman I've loved so much that I've been trying to protect her from me, from my impending end and the messes it will bring—when all she wants is a chance for us to play peekaboo together with the world, see whatever it offers us when we open our eyes wide in wonder. To say yes even to the bad stuff.

I could have saved a lot of people a lot of trouble if I'd been smart enough to learn this sooner: Your only moral obligation in life is to make the people you love smile, which you do by being the best version of you that you can possibly be. Not the scared, sick, distracted you rushing through the world and trying to get it all in before it's too late, but the you that says yes. The you that helps *them* say yes.

And so, because there is someone else I want to make smile, I say yes.
In the deep night, I step outside my room on Ofu. I pick up a seashell, a piece of the world, on the beach lapped by water so clear that the sand beneath glitters moonlight like the inside of a prism. Above me are stars in shapes I can't name, which means I can wish them into any shape I wish them to be.

Life, the world, are not buckets to fill; they are bedtime stories to tell. The excited whispers of two people saying, "Yes, and then we'll..." and the answer "Yes, and then we'll..."

So I will go home, put the seashell in lovely Daz's hand, and tell her this bedtime story. I won't try to protect her from what is happening to me anymore. I will share that world with her just as we will share the vast Earth when we wake up and walk into some city unknown.

We will cross the great ocean again and again, knowing there is time.

Rainer Maria Rilke, in what may be the most beautiful lines in poetry, wrote:

"Ah the ball that we dared, that we hurled into infinite space, doesn't it fill our hands differently with its return: heavier by the weight of where it has been."

That is why I travel. How travel keeps me alive. Traveling teaches us to dare, again and again, to say yes to the moments of wonder, so many of them, blown across the landscape with the generous weight of seeded flowers—and to share them with the people we hold dear.

I travel to live in the answered prayer that is a smile line.

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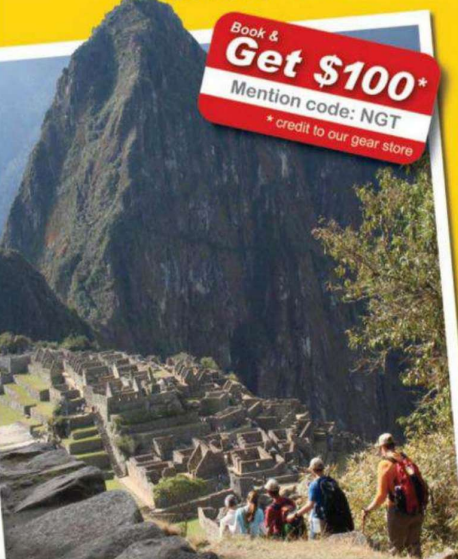
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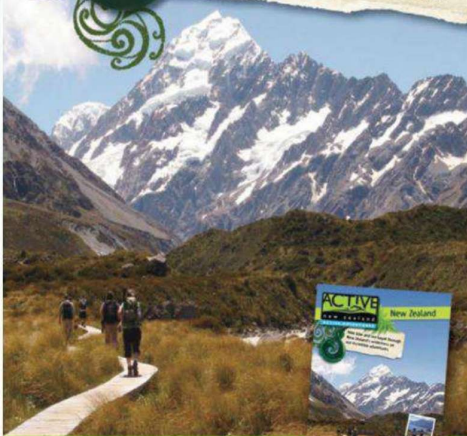
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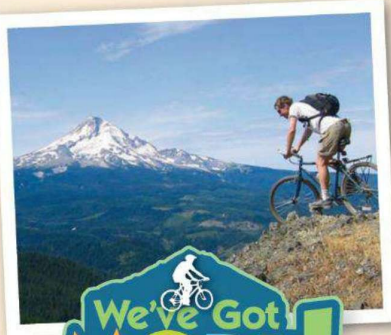
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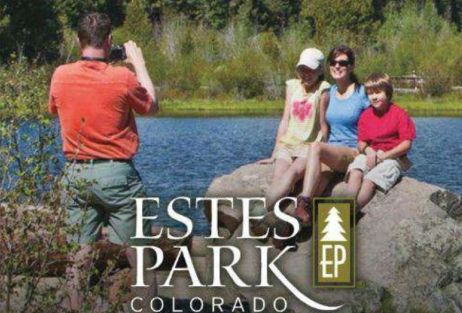
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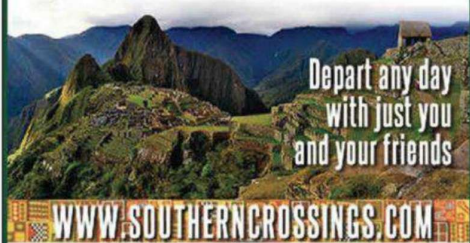
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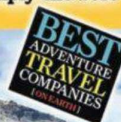
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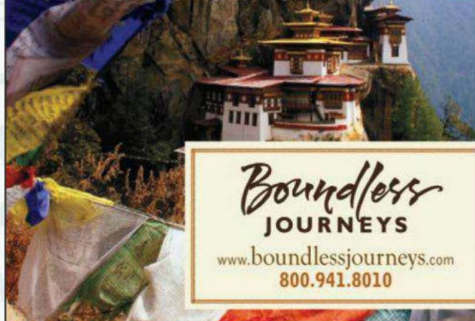
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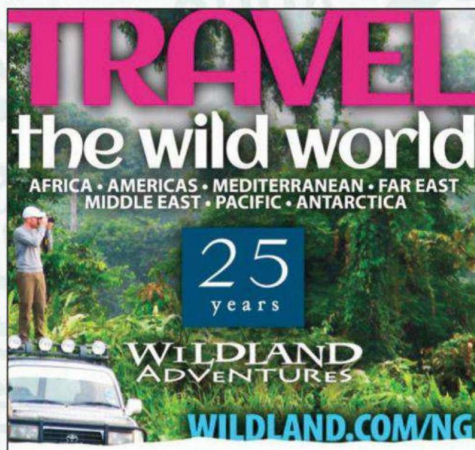
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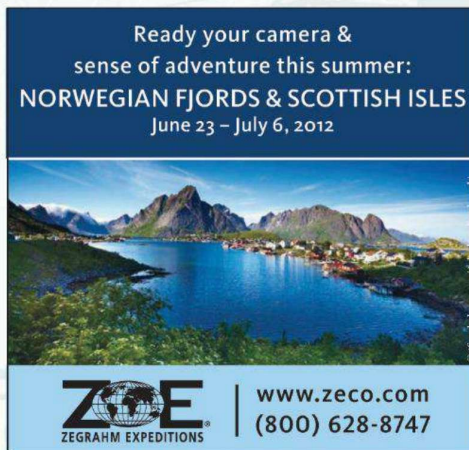
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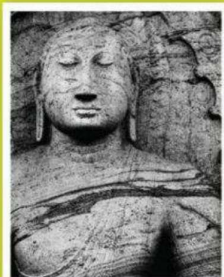
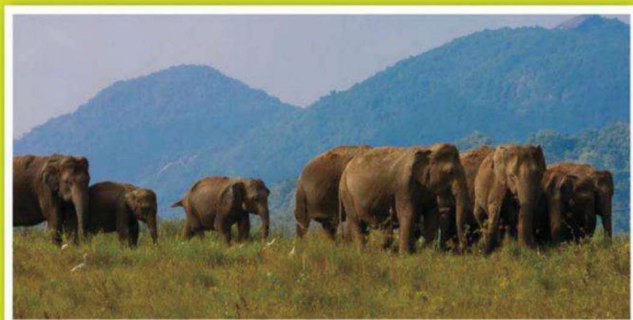
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Golden Gate Bridge

ENGINEERING WONDER or colossal work of art? For many who drive or bike across, or simply admire it from afar, the Golden Gate Bridge is both. Vaulting across the milewide strait for which it's named, joining San Francisco Bay with the Pacific Ocean, the span—celebrating its 75th anniversary—opened May 28, 1937, after four-plus years of construction. Though the bridge links San Francisco's urban skyline with the hills of Marin County to the north, it's far more than just functional. Mysterious when shrouded in fog, vivid when bathed in the supple light of the bay, it remains a timeless symbol of a city. —CHRISTOPHER HALL

LENGTH 1.7 miles, including approaches. The main suspension span (0.8 miles) is currently the world's ninth longest.

HEIGHT 746 feet, about 100 feet shorter than San Francisco's Transamerica Pyramid.

AVERAGE DAILY USE 110,113 vehicles, 10,000 pedestrians, and 6,000 bicycles per day.

BEST SPOT FOR A PHOTO The Marin Headlands above the northern end, where the view includes San Francisco's skyline.

COOL HUE International orange, selected to complement the natural setting. The U.S. Navy had wanted black with yellow stripes.

CLOSURES Six total—three for high winds, one for a 50th anniversary walk, and one each during visits of FDR and Charles de Gaulle.

MOST PEDESTRIANS AT ONE TIME 300,000 during the anniversary walk, which flattened the roadway's normal arc from the weight.

CONSTRUCTION FATALITIES Eleven. In addition, 19 workers became members of the "Halfway-to-Hell Club" when a net stopped their falls.

BIGGEST MYTH That it's regularly repainted end-to-end. In fact, continuous touch-ups maintain the 83,000 tons of structural steel.

75TH BIRTHDAY BASH Sunday, May 27, the Golden Gate Festival ends with a fireworks display over the bridge.



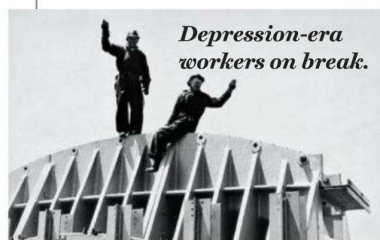
TRAVEL IQ

How many gallons of water pass through the bridge per hour during incoming fog?

- a) 12.2 million
- b) 3.2 million
- c) 875,000
- d) 7.5 million

ANSWER: D

LUCKY RIDER On February 22, 1985, the one billionth driver crossed the bridge. Arthur Molinari, a dentist, received a bridge-construction hard hat and a case of champagne. ■



Depression-era workers on break.

GEORGE STEINMETZ/CORBIS (VIEW FROM TOP OF BRIDGE), FREDERIC LARSON/SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE/CORBIS (BRIDGE WITH FOG), UNDERWOOD & UNDERWOOD/CORBIS (MEN ON BRIDGE)

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